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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS

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,, II. JUDGES TO JOB
,, III. PSALMS TO ISAIAH
,, IV. JEREMIAH TO MATTHEW
,, V. MARK TO JOHN
,, VI. ACTS TO REVELATION

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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.
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"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"
AND OTHER WORKS

VOLUME VI

ACTS to REVELATION

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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS.

LUKE.

The former treatise I made, O Theophilus.—Acts i. 1.

THERE is a favourite composition exercise (a favourite of your teacher, I mean) which you all know. You are asked to write a letter to a friend, perhaps telling what you have done during the summer holidays, perhaps describing some event that has taken place recently in your neighbourhood. You know that that letter is going to be criticized and blue-pencilled, so you take special pains with such details as the beginning and the ending. You see that the address is neatly written in the top right-hand corner and that the date is correctly given underneath. Then you leave a space of a line or two and begin, "Dear," or "My Dear So-and-so," well to the left of the sheet. Below that but a little bit in from the margin you begin the real contents of your letter—the polite remarks about the supposed last letter you have received from your correspondent. After that you come to the information about your doings.

Now though it may not look very like it, to-day's text is the beginning of a letter. It is the beginning of a very long letter of twenty-eight chapters. And you will notice that it is written to a man called Theophilus. Who Theophilus was we do not know for certain, but he is supposed to have been a man of rank who was a follower of Christ. You will notice that the writer of the letter mentions a former letter—treatise he calls it—which he had already written to Theophilus. We have all read that letter, or bits of it. For it is the book of the Bible which we call the Gospel according to St. Luke. It was Luke who wrote both it and the Book of Acts; and to him we owe not only a most beautiful biography of Christ, but also a history of what befell the Christians who lived in the half century immediately following Christ's death.

Who was Luke? He is so anxious to tell us about Christ and the early Christians that he keeps himself in the background. He never mentions his own name, but all the same he lets slip a few facts about himself. In the later chapters of the Book of Acts you will notice that when he is describing some of Paul's journeys, especially his last voyage to Rome, he says, "We" did such and such. That shows that he was Paul's companion at the time. Indeed so minute are some of the descriptions that scholars think he must have copied them from a diary he kept at the time.

But though Luke was so silent about himself, Paul was not silent about him. Twice he mentions him, and each time he says something kind about him. In

a letter written to the Colossians, Paul sends greetings to them from "Luke, the beloved physician." That shows us that Luke was a medical man and that he was with Paul in Rome. In the second letter to Timothy, which Paul wrote shortly before his death, he says "Only Luke is with me." That shows us that at the end of Paul's life, when some of his followers had deserted him, Luke was still faithful.

Out of these little scraps of information, a few more scraps gathered from writings of the early centuries, and a very close study of all Luke wrote, clever men have been able to piece together Luke's history and to tell us many interesting facts about him.

Luke was a Gentile, not a Jew. He first met Paul at Troas. Some think that he was the "man from Macedonia" who appeared in a dream to Paul and asked the apostle to go over into Macedonia and help them. Whether that be the case or not, he and Paul made their first missionary journey together into Macedonia. Paul was far from strong and Luke as physician was a great comfort to him. He not only took care of Paul. He helped him to heal the sick who were constantly brought to the apostle to be cured. So we may call Luke "the first medical missionary." If you read Luke's Gospel you can't help noticing how many miracles of healing he records, and how he gives details that a doctor would naturally notice.

On one occasion Luke accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. There we may be sure he met and talked with many who had known Christ on earth. You can imagine

how eagerly he questioned them about the great Healer and how carefully he noted and remembered all they told him.

When Paul was at last sent as a prisoner to Rome, Luke went with him—not as a fellow-prisoner, but as a friend. He stayed long in Rome and while there he met many of those Christians whose names are mentioned in Paul's letters. He must have seen quite a lot, for instance, of John Mark, the man who wrote Mark's Gospel.

It was not till forty or fifty years after Christ's death that Luke wrote his own Gospel, but we know that what he wrote is true to all that happened, for he tells us himself that he got his information and collected his stories from those who had really seen and heard Jesus. And besides that, he had Mark's Gospel to refer to, for it was already written.

I'm afraid we don't realize how many lovely Bible stories we owe to Luke. If it had not been for him we should never have heard how the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest," and how the shepherds heard the song and hastened to worship the Babe who lay in the manger at Bethlehem. Without Luke we should have missed the story of how Christ as a boy of twelve visited the Temple at Jerusalem and loved it so much that He stayed behind. We should never have heard the story of plucky little Zacchæus either, and how he climbed the tree to see his Lord. As for the parables! Why, without Luke we should have lacked the story of the Good Samaritan, the story of the Prodigal Son, the

story of the Pharisee and the Publican, and oh! ever so many more.

We need not count them all over here; but you can try it yourselves at home. When you have done so I'm sure you will agree that had it not been for the loving pen and the tender heart of "the beloved physician," the Bible to-day would have been a poorer Book for you and me.

TRYING TO SEE INTO HEAVEN.

Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?—Acts i. 11 (AV).

HAVE you ever watched a steamer that held a very dear friend leave the pier and steam out into the ocean? If you have, you will remember how you stood and gazed after it. You wanted to remain on the pier as long as the steamer was within sight.

Do you wonder that when Jesus was suddenly taken from the disciples they stood and gazed up into heaven? His loss was to them like the snapping of a string. They had been trying to live lives like His, they had been strung up, so to speak, when all at once everything seemed to have gone wrong. He was absent; they were left alone. It was true to their likeness to us that they should pause and wonder. You have noticed that when a very little child misses its mother, it looks round about and for a moment wonders where she has gone. Then there follows the cry that can be stilled only by the mother coming back.

"How can we go back to the world without Him?" the disciples asked themselves. To gaze upwards, to gaze at each other was no solution. But, "while they

looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The angels' promise recalled to the disciples many things Christ had said to them. They had been forgetting His teaching in thinking of Himself. They went home happy. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. I have heard of people to whom the same feeling came when they had lost someone who was a great help. A lady heard of the death of a dear brother, who was a missionary in China. She did not cry; she said very simply to the messenger who brought the news, "My brother is nearer me now; he is living with God." She felt that God was their father and that heaven was their home.

After this, the disciples, as they travelled about and preached in Judæa, had great things to think about. If sometimes they longed for their Master, or wanted to be with Him, the remembrance of His message passed through their minds. Thus they went on from day to day. And thus Christ's followers are going on still.

Boys and girls, I know how happy this life feels for you. We older people sometimes envy your enjoyment of it. But we want you to know something of the unseen world round about you. There is heaven where Jesus has gone. It is not far away. We want

you to think of it sometimes. We want you to remember that heaven is your lasting home and that Jesus has gone there to prepare the home for you and make it homelike. Then, when you have, like the disciples, taken a peep into heaven we want you to copy them in going back to serve Christ on earth.

The way you can do this best is to do your duty here every day. Whatever it be it is worth doing as well as you possibly can do it, for the better you do it the better you are serving Christ.

Christ is coming again. We do not know when or where; but this eleventh verse of the first chapter of Acts tells us that He will surely come. Shall we be glad to see Him? Shall we run to meet Him and welcome Him? Why, of course we shall! Not we only, but all who love Him.

An Englishman who was travelling in the Soudan awoke one day from his mid-day siesta to find a noble-looking old Arab standing patiently beside him. The Arab greeted him courteously and then inquired anxiously, "Has the prophet Jesus come back to earth yet?" "No," said the Englishman, "not yet." "Do you know when He is coming?" persisted the Arab. "No," again replied the traveller, "No one knows that." "Ah," said the Arab, sadly, "I hoped you might know. Because when He comes I should not like to miss Him. I should like to see Him and I should like to give Him greeting."

BETTER THAN GOLD.

Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee.—Acts iii. 6.

LONG, long ago there lived in Jerusalem a certain lame man. He was over forty years old, but he had never been able to walk at all. When other babies were learning to toddle he had lain still and quiet, not because he did not want to walk, but because his little feet and ankles were quite powerless. Later he had watched the boys at their merry games and longed to join them; but his poor, useless legs would not bear him, and he was obliged just to look on and long. Then he had grown to be a man, and he had seen other men, strong and straight, go out to fight the world and earn their bread, and still he lay helpless; and as he was poor and could not work, his friends carried him daily and laid him at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple so that he might ask alms of those who were going in to pray.

I do not know why he chose the Beautiful Gate. Perhaps because it was one of the main entrances. Many people passed that way, and he would be likely to receive a good deal of money. Perhaps it was because he liked to have something beautiful to look

at, for the name seems to tell us that this gate was more beautiful than any of the others. At any rate, there he lay day after day, year after year, until he came to be a middle-aged man.

Then one morning he saw two men approaching. They were plainly clad and seemed to be poor men, but they had kind faces. Perhaps they might be able to spare him a few small coins. As they passed he stretched out a hand to ask for alms. The men stopped and looked at him steadily. This was something different from what usually happened. People had got so accustomed to seeing him there that they either passed him by unheeding or, barely glancing at him, dropped a coin into his hand. But these men stopped to look at him, and the elder one spoke. "Look on us," he said. And the lame man obeyed, expecting to receive a coin. But he was going to receive something that would be of more value to him than all the money in the world. "Silver and gold have I none," said the stranger, "but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Then he stretched out his hand to raise him up, and the lame man grasped it. Immediately strength came into his ankles and his feet, and springing up he stood and walked for the first time in his life.

He went with the two strangers into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people who saw him were filled with wonder, for they knew that this was the man who for long years had begged for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

You know that this is a true story, that the stranger who healed the lame man was none other than the apostle Peter. Now, if you forget all the rest of the story, I want you to try to remember just one little bit—Peter's gift to the lame man. "Silver and gold have I none," he said, "but what I have, that give I thee."

I think most boys and girls are a little like Peter. They haven't got any silver and gold to give; sometimes they haven't even any pennies. Well, perhaps they have something better. I don't say that it is not good to give pennies if you have them, especially if you have to give up something you want in parting with them, but there are some things worth more than money.

This story of Peter and the lame man reminds me of an incident in the life of a great Russian author and prince—Count Tolstoi.

One day, in the streets of Petrograd, he came upon a beggar who held out his hand and asked for alms. The count felt in all his pockets, but not a single coin could he find. But he had something with him that he carried always. He went to the beggar and said, "Brother, I have nothing, but I take your hand, and I love you." And the beggar, touched by the warm kind words, looked up in the count's face and said, "Thank you, brother, that also is a gift."

That is a gift we can all give; is it not?—the gift of love and kindness and sympathy. And it is a gift more precious than gold.

If any little word of mine
  May make a life the brighter,
If any little song of mine
  May make a heart the lighter,
God help me speak that little word,
  And take my bit of singing,
And drop it in some lonely vale,
  To set the echoes ringing!

If any little love of mine
  May make a life the sweeter,
If any little care of mine
  May make a friend's the fleeter,
If any lift of mine may ease
  The burden of another,
God give me love, and care, and strength
  To help my toiling brother!

LIKE TO LIKE.

And being let go, they went to their own company.—Acts iv. 23 (AV).

WHO were the men who "went to their own company"? They were Peter and John, the disciples of Jesus. Do you remember the story? The two disciples had healed a lame man who lay at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple and the event had caused great excitement among the people. Now you know what happens in our own towns when anything unusual occurs—a big crowd gathers. It was just the same in Jerusalem. The people ran together to see what was the matter, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that there were a great many small boys in that crowd.

Peter began to speak to the people about how they had crucified Christ and how He had risen again, and many of them were won over to the side of Jesus. But when the priests heard about it, they were very much alarmed, so they shut up Peter and John in prison for the night. The following morning the rulers and elders and scribes had Peter and John brought into their midst, and they tried to get them to promise not to speak any more to the people. But when the disciples refused to do this, the council, after threatening them,

let them go, for they were afraid of the people. And Peter and John, being let go, "went to their own company."

Who were the companions to whom Peter and John went? They were also disciples of Jesus, and the next few verses tell us what kind of men they were. They were good men, and they were brave men, praying that they might still have boldness to speak the word in spite of the threats that had been made.

Do you know that if we had learned nothing more about Peter and John than what is told us in our text and what is said about the company to which they joined themselves, we could still have guessed what kind of men they were. I wonder why? Well, it's just like this. A man or a woman, a boy or a girl, is known by the company they choose *when they are free to choose.* If we had been told what kind of company Peter and John had in prison we shouldn't have known what kind of men they themselves were. Very likely they had beside them robbers and murderers, but that did not mean that *they* were robbers and murderers. Their companions were chosen for them. But as soon as they were free they went to the companions they had chosen of their own accord, and people do not choose companions unless they like them and have something in common with them.

Now if somebody were to ask me about one of you—"What kind of boy is that?" or, "What do you think of that girl?" I should say to them, "Will you give

me a few days to find out, and then I shall tell you?" Of course I should have to put on a sort of invisible cap, because if you knew I was watching you, you might be a different kind of boy or girl—not exactly the real boy or girl.

Well, suppose I wore my invisible cap and set out to watch you, where do you think I should go? Perhaps you imagine I should follow you into school and stand behind your form or sit on your desk to see how you did your lessons. Oh dear no! I shouldn't think of wasting time over that. I should know that while you were in school you had to keep certain rules and do certain things, that you were just one of a number who had to keep these same rules and do these same things. So while you were in school I should take a little nap to prepare me for the hard work I should have later on.

But when school hours were over, when you were "let go," I should stand beside the door and watch you coming out; I should follow you to the playground and notice what kind of games you played, and how you played them; I should notice what sort of temper you showed at games, whether you played fair, and whether you gave the other boy credit for playing fair; I should follow you on the way home; I should notice the groups you formed and who were your chums. Then when your lessons were learned in the evening and your books put away, I should watch how you employed your spare time. And this is what I might see.

Here is a boy or girl who takes up a book and sits

down to devour it quite oblivious of all that is going on around. They are the book-worms of the school. Here are others who get out their cricket bat or their tennis racquet. They are fond of games. Here is a boy who seizes his tools and starts whittling and hammering at something. He has a taste for engineering. Here is a girl who likes to bake or sew. She is going to be a good housewife. Here is another girl who takes out her paint-box and her pencil. She has a love for art. Here is a boy who hangs about the street idle. He is in danger of getting into serious mischief and making a mess of his life. Here is a girl who is *so* tired of everything, and thinks there is nothing nice to do. She is laying the foundations of an unhappy nature, and if she doesn't pull herself together, she will turn out a bore to herself and to her friends.

Yes, it isn't how we behave when we are being watched and held in that shows what we really are: it is the way we act when we are free and nobody is looking on. Are we just as straight and upright behind our mother's and our father's back as we would be if they were looking on?

There is a story of an American statesman who lost his wife, and on her tombstone he had these words carved—"Sacred to the memory of Jocelyn, wife of J. Sterling Morton and mother of Paul, Mark and Joy Morton." One day a friend who had seen the tombstone remarked on the strangeness of the inscription, and asked Mr. Morton why he had the boys' names put there. And what do you think the statesman

replied? "I have taken my boys to see the tombstone, and I have told them that if one of them does anything to dishonour his mother's memory I will have that one's name chiselled off the stone."

I think those boys would be very careful always to be honourable, and clean, and true. I think they would be anxious never to do anything mean or unworthy. And I think it is a splendid rule for all of us, whether our mothers are with us still, or whether they are waiting for us in our Home above, never to do anything anywhere, of which they would be ashamed.

STUBBORN PETER.

We must obey God rather than men.—Acts v. 29.

ALL the world over, people who have had the good luck to be born in Scotland are spoken of as having in them the making of good citizens and good church members. They are also said to be *dour*—which means something akin to stubborn. You boys know some stubborn fellows at school. Stubbornness is met with among girls too. "Stubborn!" some boy may be saying, "that was why Macgregor was thrashed. The master called him 'a stubborn fool.'" And I have known a girl who had a long task set her for the same reason. All the same, the world is better because there have been a few stubborn men and women in it, and a stubborn boy may be a very splendid fellow.

Stubborn comes from a good old English word, "stub," meaning the short stump of a tree, from which all the branches have long since been broken or cut off. The wind has no effect upon it. There the "stub" stands, firm and immovable, almost like a rock. Now, if you think for a minute, it will dawn upon you what the real meaning of "stubborn" is.

Think of Peter having become a "stub." You

remember what a cowardly sort of fellow he showed himself one night. Now a great change has come over him. He is "stubborn." When told that a certain course adopted by him is disapproved of, he stands firm and says, "We must obey God rather than men."

I remember once hearing a boy play the violin at a concert. He was very nervous. After he had played a page or two of his piece, he seemed to forget, for he stopped. Do you think he gave up, and ran from the platform? No; he stood and waited for a few moments, then began again, stopped once more, tried yet again, and at last succeeded splendidly. It is out of such boys that the Peters are made. In his efforts to do right, didn't Peter break down more than once? He seemed to have no courage in those days. He even denied Jesus Christ. But he wept; and then he just tried again.

The Resurrection of Jesus taught Peter many a lesson. He knew that his present action might mean giving up his life. But while he looked at the magistrates, and knew that the Roman government was behind them, he remembered that on his side was the King of kings. The law of the land was written on tables, but in his heart was the law of God. "We must obey God rather than men," he said. God had pointed out the way to him: he would go straight ahead.

It is the law of God in the heart that can make boys and girls "stubborn" in this good sense.

Lying on his face before the fire in an American log cabin, a little "stubborn" fellow committed to memory the four Gospels, *Æsop's Fables*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. When he was nineteen, he saw a young girl sold at public auction, and told his brother, that if ever he had a chance he would hit slavery the hardest blow he could. At twenty he earned a new suit of clothes for himself by doing some work for a farmer. Several years later he was elected a Senator, and later still a President. Lincoln—for it was he—worked as hard to help men as slave masters did to recover an escaped slave to bondage. Many of the Americans who love his memory think that the name of Abraham Lincoln will one day be mentioned alongside that of Moses, Julius Cæsar, Paul, Shakespeare, and—shall we ourselves add?—Peter. What made Lincoln "stubborn" was that God had written a law of love in his heart. He had a great deal of sorrow in his life, and in the end men slew him, but he did a great work. His motto was, I "must obey God rather than men."

Boys and girls, are you to be like Lincoln, like Peter—stubborn in obeying God rather than men?

THE ANGEL FACE.

And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.—Acts vi. 15.

To-day I want to speak to you about the man with the angel face—Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

Stephen had been brought before the Jewish Council and falsely accused of speaking against God, against Moses, and against the Temple. False witnesses had twisted the words he had spoken in their synagogues till these words were given a meaning he had never intended.

It was at the moment when his enemies were misrepresenting all that he had said, at the moment when he knew that his life was in grave danger, that Stephen's face was "as it had been the face of an angel." Doesn't it seem strange that it was just then that Stephen's face wore the angel-look? You might have expected it to wear a look of indignation—indignation at the false accusations that were being made, or even a look of fear, fear of what might be before him; but Stephen had got above and beyond these things.

I think we can picture that meeting of the council—the priests, elders, and scribes on whose faces were written pride, anger, hatred, and jealousy; and, con-

fronting them, the man with the pure, calm, radiant countenance.

What was it that made Stephen's face like the face of an angel?

Well, first of all, I think it was his faith in God. We are told that Stephen was a man "full of faith." He had got so near to God that he knew that everything was right, he knew that there was a life beyond this one and that whatever they did to him they could not separate him from the love of Christ—that even if they put him to death, they would just be sending him home a little sooner.

And then, I think Stephen's pure life and character shone in his face. You cannot have an angel face without an angel heart. It was not the doing of one hour. Stephen had lived a life of love and unselfishness, and at the moment he was tested his goodness and purity shone in his face.

But I think the light came from without as well as from within. It was the reflected light of God's presence. God was very near Stephen at that time, and Stephen knew it and felt it. And a little later, just before his death, he had a vision of the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. I think that then, too, his face must have been as the face of an angel.

Now we may each have the face of an angel. God has put an angel into the heart of every one of us, and if we only give that angel a chance to grow, we too

may become as the angels. Have you ever looked on the face of a very young child when he was asleep? If you have, you will have seen the angel-look on it—calm and pure. Perhaps the little one as he dreams has visions of God who gave to him his soul. But as the child grows older he gradually loses that angel-look in sleep. What is it that blots it out? It is the thing that blots all the beauty out of the world and brings pain and sorrow—it is sin.

And so, boys and girls, if we want to have an angel face we must, like Stephen, have the angel heart. For the face is a sort of photograph of the heart, and all we think or say or do is more or less shown on our countenance. It is told of a missionary to China that he was so full of love to God and man that his great loving heart made his face glow. And the natives called him "Mr. Gloryface."

Yes, bad thoughts and tempers and unkind deeds will very surely lay their mark on the most beautiful face and mar all its beauty. But kind thoughts and unselfish actions will glorify the plainest face and make it radiant with a beauty that is of far more value than mere surface loveliness.

But how are we to get back the angel heart that sin has spoiled, the angel heart that will give us the angel face? Do you know the legend of the spots on the cowslip?

On the petals of the cowslip are "five small drops of red," and these five drops were supposed to represent the five wounds with which Christ was wounded on the

Cross. It was said that, on account of these five spots, the cowslip had the virtue of keeping the beauty of youth for ever unspoilt. It is the wounds of Christ that keep the beauty of our hearts unspoilt. It is those wounds that can wash away the stains from them when we have soiled them. It is those wounds that can make them pure and fair again. Jesus alone can give us the angel heart.

Will you ask Jesus to make your heart as the heart of an angel? Then your face will shine as Stephen's did with the very light of God's presence, and your life will be glorified and perfected in Christ.

STRAIGHT STREET.

The street which is called Straight.—Acts ix. 11.

THE street called Straight was in the city of Damascus. St. Paul went to stay there just after his conversion and it was there that he received back his sight.

Damascus is an old, old city. Some people say it is the oldest city in the world. It was in existence thousands of years before Christ, and it is still in existence. Through the centre of the city still runs the street which is called Straight. It leads in a direct line from the western gate to the eastern gate. Much of its glory has departed, but in St. Paul's time it was a very fine street. It was over one hundred feet wide, and nearly a mile in length, and it was divided by beautiful columns into three parts. The middle portion was reserved for foot passengers, and the sides were used by chariots and horsemen—those going eastward keeping to one side, and those going westward to the other. You see the people in Damascus rather turned things upside down. We put our carriages in the middle of our streets, and our foot-passengers at the sides.

I wonder why the people of Damascus made their road quite straight. Perhaps they thought it was the

quickest way of getting from one side of the city to the other, and if they did, I think they were very sensible. You know how annoying it is, if you are in a hurry, to have to go twice the distance you need, just because the road winds in and out, and turns corners.

Now, I think life is rather like a city traversed by many roads. We enter by the East Gate and we have to reach the West Gate, and we choose our own path. The best road to choose is the straight road of uprightness, and honour, and duty; and I am going to tell you why I think it is the best.

First of all, the straight road is the best because it is the *quickest.* Those who walk in a crooked path waste a lot of time, often lose their way, and generally miss the goal which they are trying to reach. There are many crooked bypaths leading off the straight road, and we are sometimes tempted to walk in them because the straight road is monotonous, and because they seem easier, but we always find they are longest and weariest in the end.

And secondly, the straight road is the best road because it is the *safest.* We can see the dangers ahead. The crooked bypaths which look so interesting lead us into quagmires and thickets, but the straight road leads safely to the goal.

Once upon a time there was a Sultan who wished to choose an honest man to collect his taxes, but he did not know how he was to secure him, so he called a wise counsellor and asked his advice. The wise man told

the Sultan to publish abroad his need, and then to invite all the applicants to his palace on a certain date, and ask them to dance. The counsellor said that he would then point out the honest man.

In due course the applicants arrived at the palace, and were told to approach the Sultan, one at a time, through a dark empty corridor. When they were all assembled before the throne the Sultan said, "Gentlemen, I should very much like to see you dance. Please dance." The men turned very red, and looked extremely uncomfortable, and all except one refused. The one man danced with great good will. Then the wise counsellor said, "That is the honest man; choose him."

How do you think he knew? He had placed sacks of money in the corridor, and all the dishonest men had filled their pockets from them. They were afraid to dance, because, if they had done so, their pockets would have sounded like money-boxes. So you see these men lost a good position because they took a bypath to become rich. The straight road is the safest and the surest in the end.

And again the straight road is the best because it is *the road heroes have trod.* Yes, it takes a hero to walk the straight road. It takes a hero to keep right on, turning neither to right or left, withstanding the temptations of the bypaths, bearing the weariness of the way.

I like that story of the slave boy who was put up for

sale in the slave-market of one of the Southern States of America. A kind man passing pitied him, and fearing lest he should fall into the hands of a cruel master, resolved to purchase him. He asked the boy, "If I buy you, will you be honest?" And the answer came—"I will be honest whether you buy me or not." That boy had a fine pride—the pride of those who walk in the straight road.

And, lastly, the straight road is the best because it is *the road Christ trod.* He trod it bravely and patiently although for Him it was a path strewn with thorns, and at the end of the way stood a Cross. And because Jesus has trod that path He has made it possible for us all to tread it, He has made it possible for those of us who have wandered from it to come back to it, and to make a new beginning. And, if across the path there sometimes lies the shadow of a cross, we know that beyond the cross there is a crown.

A CHOSEN VESSEL.

He is a chosen vessel unto me.—Acts ix. 15.

I WONDER how many of you can make clay models. I have seen boys and girls create wonderful things out of clay—cups and saucers, and birds' nests, and queer animals. Well you know that our cups and saucers and plates and vases are made out of clay also. Only the clay goes through so many different processes that when the china reaches us it doesn't look a bit like the ugly-looking grey lumps that we make into models.

First of all, the moist prepared clay is formed into shape on the potter's wheel. The potter throws the lump on to his wheel which moves round horizontally, and as the wheel spins round, with a deft touch here and there he moulds the clay into the shape he wants.

When the vessel is shaped it is put away to dry for a short time and then it is packed with others of its kind into a sort of oven called a seggar. There it is baked for forty hours, and it comes out firm and hard. After being baked the china is ready to be decorated. This is done by pressing on transfer designs. The best kinds of china are hand-painted, but this is too

expensive a way to ornament ordinary dishes. Lastly, the china is given its beautiful glossy surface by being dipped in liquid glaze and then baked for other fourteen hours.

Now, God is just like a great Potter, and we are like the clay in His hands. He moulds and forms our characters, and if we let Him do with them as He will, He makes them into very beautiful shapes. But I want you to think to-day rather of the use God has for His vessels than of the way He makes them. The great Potter never makes two vessels exactly alike. He forms each into a different shape, and He has a different use for each. He has given us each our work to do.

Who was the "chosen vessel" of our text, and for what had he been chosen? The vessel was St. Paul, who had just seen that great light from heaven, and had been led blind into Damascus, and God had chosen him to be His instrument to bear His name before "the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." St. Paul was the greatest missionary who ever lived. Think of the journeys he made—tremendous in those days—and of the sermons he preached, and of the works of healing he performed, and of the letters he wrote to the different churches; and all the time he was hampered by a serious bodily infirmity.

Now God may not call you to be missionaries like Paul, but He has some special niche for you to fill. Each of you is a chosen vessel unto God

just as much as Paul was; each of you is here for a purpose, and if you do not fulfil that purpose, you are a failure, however rich and prosperous you may become.

There are two things I should like you to remember, and the first is that *God thinks us worth using.* Perhaps you say, "I am only a child and a very ordinary child. I can't be of very much use." That is a mistaken idea. You never know how much good you are doing although you are in a quiet, hidden corner. That is your corner at present—the corner God has chosen for you, and He never makes a mistake. He has some work for you to do there.

One Sunday morning, more than a hundred years ago, a gloomy-looking elder came to speak to his minister before the morning service. He told him he thought something must be wrong as only one member had been added to the church in a year, and that member was just a boy. The poor old minister felt very sad. He thought that perhaps he had failed in his work. But as he was leaving the church, after the service, the boy who was his only new member came to him and told him he would like to be a minister and, if possible, a missionary. The old man was greatly cheered, and he firmly believed the boy would have his wish. Years passed, and the boy became the great missionary, Robert Moffat, who carried the Gospel into Africa, translated it into native languages, and was famous in scientific research. The old minister's labours and prayers had not been in vain, and

through that boy he became a great blessing to the world.

So we need never despair of being of no use, however humble our position. God thinks us worth using, and after all it is better to be just a plain, ordinary tea-cup to carry a cup of cold water to somebody's lips than a useless china ornament, even although that ornament be fit for a king's palace.

The other thing I want you to remember is that *to be useful we must be willing to be used.* A vessel is made to contain things, and to pass them on for the use of others. So if our vessels are to be of use we must first get them filled. Where are we to fill them? There is only one place—at the fountain of Christ's love. And then when we have filled our vessels we must be willing to give out that love in joy and helpfulness to others.

The Master stood in His garden,
Among the lilies fair,
Which His own right hand had planted,
And trained with tenderest care.

He looked at their snowy blossoms,
And marked with observant eye
That His flowers were sadly drooping,
For their leaves were parched and dry.

Close to His feet, on the pathway,
Empty and frail and small,
An earthen vessel was lying,
Which seemed of no use at all;

But the Master saw and raised it
From the dust in which it lay,
And smiled, as He gently whispered,
"This shall do my work to-day."

So to the fountain He took it,
And filled it full to the brim;
How glad was the earthen vessel
To be of some use to Him!

SEASIDE LODGINGS.

He lodgeth . . . by the seaside.—Acts x. 6.

THE summer holidays have come round once more, and very soon we shall be packing our boxes, and brown-papering our windows, and setting off for "somewhere" in the country. Now I think the very best place to spend a holiday is the seaside, because there we find so many nice things to amuse us. There is the cool water in which we can splash on a hot day, and the pools at the water's edge which are just made for paddling. There are the sands where we can have such glorious fun riding on donkeys, building houses, and making turreted castles surrounded by moats. And there are the rocks with their pools in which we can find all sorts of wonderful things—shells, and crabs, and shrimps, and small fish, and beautiful sea-weeds. There are the small boats in which we may spend the afternoons fishing and rowing. There are a dozen other nice things. We leave home rather tired and pale, and we come back strong and brown. Why, even the very sea-weedy smell as we sniff it at the railway carriage window makes us feel well!

Yes, I think the seaside is one of the very best

places to spend a holiday, so to-day I have chosen a seaside text—"He lodgeth . . . by the seaside."

Now I suppose you know who it was that was lodging by the seaside. It was Simon Peter, and he was staying at Joppa, with a man called Simon, a tanner by trade. Joppa was an important seaport in those days. It was the seaport of Jerusalem—just as Leith is the seaport of Edinburgh; only Jerusalem was a hundred miles distant. The town still exists, but it has changed its name to Jaffa; it is from there we get those lovely, big, juicy oranges called Jaffa oranges.

The spot where Simon Peter stayed is still shown to visitors, though a mosque has taken the place of the house in which he lodged. From that point there is a lovely view out over the Mediterranean Sea, and the waves wash right up to the walls of the courtyard, so that Peter could not have been nearer the sea unless he had lived in a boat.

I am not going to speak to you about the wonderful thing that happened to Peter at Joppa, because you can read that for yourselves in the tenth chapter of the Book of Acts, but I want you to think of a few of the lessons which the seaside teaches us.

Perhaps some of you say, "Oh, lessons again! We don't want to hear any more about lessons for weeks and weeks." But then, you see, the seaside teaches its lessons in such a nice way that they are just like stories.

I want to speak to you about the rocks and some of the curious things you find there.

1. First of all, there are our friends the crabs. Do you know how a crab grows? His outer coat or shell, as we call it, is very hard and will not stretch in the slightest degree, so when he wants to grow he has to change his coat, or rather get rid of the coat he has and grow a new one. This he does about once a year until he is quite full-grown. It takes him a few days to complete the change, and he always hides himself during that time because, when he has got rid of his old coat of mail, and has not yet grown a new one, his body is quite soft and unprotected from his enemies.

Now I often wish some people were more like crabs. You hear them saying, "Oh, it's no use trying to be good. I've tried already dozens of times, and I've always failed." Well, no wonder these people have always failed—they are always thinking of their failures! They stick to their old coats which have grown too small for them, and they will never "grow in grace" until they leave these old coats behind, forget about them, and put on a new coat of fresh endeavour.

We are meant to remember failures only as they help us to avoid the same mistakes the next time; we are not meant to think about them until they cramp us and stunt our growth. So if you have failed in any way, take heart and try again. Forget that you have failed, and make up your mind that you will succeed yet.

2. If you hunt in the muddy pools at low water you may find a creature which looks something like a hairy slug. It is between three and four inches long, and its almond-shaped body is covered with long hairs. This curious creature is called a sea mouse. It looks very dull and dingy, but if you wash it repeatedly in clean pools until all the mud is gone, you will see that it is very beautiful. All the colours of the rainbow seem to be chasing each other over its bristles and altering with every movement of the creature and every change of light.

Doesn't it seem strange that this beautiful creature should live with its beauty covered up? And yet I think lots of boys and girls and men and women are like this sea mouse. They show a very ugly outside to the world and people never guess what a great deal of beauty they have underneath. And, do you know, I think we are all like this dingy sea mouse until Jesus comes to us and washes away the ugly mud of sin that covers up the beauty of our souls.

3. There is just one more sea creature I wish to talk about, and that is the jelly-fish. You often see jelly-fish floating in the water when you are paddling or bathing—curious bluish creatures that look like large blobs of jelly. But the jelly-fish you should avoid is the big yellowish-brown one which sometimes comes in the early autumn. It has a fringe all round its body of what look like hairs, but these harmless-looking things are really stings. If they sting you

they can hurt very badly, and if you have a thin skin, they may make you seriously ill.

Now there are two things I should like to say. First, "Don't be a stinging jelly-fish." Bitter, angry words can hurt and sting the heart just as much as the stings of the jelly-fish can hurt the body. And, second, "Don't be a thin-skinned person who magnifies little stings into big hurts." Such people are a great bother to their friends and they make themselves needlessly unhappy. Think of other people, not of your own poor little feelings. That is the best recipe for growing a stronger skin.

There are many other curious and wonderful things down by the sea which you will be able to study for yourself. Somehow or other God seems very near to us at the seaside. When we look at the grains of sand—countless in number—they speak to us of the multitude of God's loving-kindnesses to us. When we study the millions of tiny creatures He has made and remember that not one of them is forgotten in His sight, that not one little life is lived unknown to Him, we marvel at the wonders of His greatness. And when we look out to the vast ocean, stretching away and away into endless space, we remember the boundless love with which He has loved us, and the infinite forgiveness which casts all our sins into the depths of the sea.

"PEOPLE, BE DOOD."

Who went about doing good.—Acts x. 38.

SOME of the boys and girls here know the name of John Ruskin. You know that he was a great writer and teacher of last century, and that the things he wrote were wise and beautiful and noble. Now I want to tell you about the first sermon John Ruskin ever preached. How old do you think he was when he preached it? Just three years! And what do you think he said?—"People, be dood. If you are dood, Dod will love you. If you are not dood, Dod will not love you. People, be dood."

Well, Ruskin was not much more than a baby then, and he didn't understand one of the most wonderful facts—that God loves us even when we are naughty, that He loves us all the time. Nevertheless I think it was very good advice that baby Ruskin gave—"People, be good"; and so I am going to say to you to-day, "People, be good; boys and girls, be good."

But what does being good mean? There have been many different ideas about that. Once upon a time men thought that to be good they must shut themselves away from the world. And some of them lived as hermits in dens and caves of the mountains and gave

themselves up to fasting and reading holy books and saying long prayers. That was not Jesus' way. We read of His going apart into a desert place to pray, but that was only that He might talk with His Father and renew His strength for the work God had given Him to do. Jesus' way of being good was doing good. Our text tells us that He "went about doing good"—not just thinking about it, or talking about it, but *doing* it. And so the best way to *be* good is to *do* good.

The other day I read a story about a father who was going from home for a short time, and as he was taking leave of his small son he said, "Goodbye; be good." "Right-o, Father!" replied the small boy. A few days later father returned from his travels and his first question was, "Well, Tommy, have you been a good boy?" "Oh yes, Father," was Tommy's prompt reply. But father had once been a boy himself, so he thought he would inquire a little farther into matters. "Well now, Tommy, did you do as your mother bade you?" Tommy was a truthful small boy, so he owned up that he hadn't always. "And were you kind to Alec?" (Alec was the small brother.) "Well, one day he made me awful mad and I struck him." "Then how do you make out that you were good?" "Well, you see, one day I heard another boy say a bad word and I smacked him on the mouth."

Tommy's father was wiser the next time he went from home. Instead of telling his son to be good this is what he said, "Do what your mother tells you

be kind to your small brother, speak the truth, and play fair." That is the kind of thing that doing good means.

You know the world is made up of a great many different kinds of people, in fact there are about as many different kinds as there are people, but if we judge people by their deeds, I think there are four main classes.

1. First, there are those who go about *doing harm.* I hope none of you belong to that class, for there are a few boys and girls in it as well as grown-ups. Wherever these people go they have a bad influence. If they get into a school, the whole tone of the school is lowered. If there are any such in your school don't have anything to do with them. You can be quite agreeable to them, but don't make them your chums or listen to their talk.

2. And then, there are those who go about the world *doing mischief.* They are not intentionally bad, these people. Very often they just mean to have a little fun. And so long as the mischief doesn't hurt others, there isn't much harm in it. But mischief has an unfortunate way of hurting others in a way we never thought of. For the mischievous people are generally the thoughtless people. Now I'm not going to mention the different kinds of mischief, because you know them just as well as I do, and if I happened to mention a particular kind you hadn't thought of, you might want to go and try it straight away. But I just want to say this.

If you do wish a little fun and nonsense, try to choose the kind that doesn't hurt other people.

3. The third kind of people go about the world *doing nothing.* I don't mean to say that they are absolutely idle. Some of them are very busy indeed. Some are very busy making money, others are very busy enjoying themselves. But for all that they do to make the world better or happier or more beautiful they might just as well not have lived.

There was a Roman Emperor once called Titus. And if he did not right some wrong, or do some good thing each day, he used to say to his courtiers, "Alas! I have lost a day."

Titus was only a heathen, but I think he might have put to shame many people who live in Christian lands. Don't be a "do-nothing." God sends us each day as a beautiful gift and we must see to it that we make good use of it. What are you doing with your gift?

4. But, lastly, there are the people who go about *doing good.* That was what Jesus did, and if we want to learn how to do good we must look to Him.

What kind of good did Jesus do? He made sick people well, He made sad people glad, He made bad people good. We can help to make sick people well, by being kind to them when they are ill, and by giving our pennies to the hospitals where the sick are cared for. We can help to make sad people glad by a smile or a word or a loving look. We can help to make bad people good. How did Jesus do it? By being good Himself, by believing the best about them, and by loving them.

And we can help to make people good in the same way—by living a beautiful life, by believing the best about others, and by loving them.

God has a big work to do in the world, and every little kind and helpful and unselfish and loving thing you do helps it on. Wouldn't you like to be God's helpers?

Somebody did a golden deed:
Somebody proved a friend in need:
Somebody sang a beautiful song:
Somebody smiled the whole day long:
Somebody thought, "'tis sweet to live":
Somebody said, "I'm glad to give":
Somebody fought a brave, good fight:
Somebody loved to help the right:
Was that somebody you?

JOHN MARK.

John, whose surname was Mark.—Acts xii. 25.

At the time of Christ's death, there lived in Jerusalem a young man called John Mark. He lived with his mother, whose name was Mary, and he was known by a nickname which means "stump-fingered," because he had had one or more of his fingers injured. Mary was a wealthy woman, and lived in a large house in Jerusalem. The house had an upper room which could hold many people. Mary was a Christian, and after the death of Christ, His followers used to meet in this upper room to pray.

John Mark knew very well all the apostles and Christians who lived in Jerusalem. Some of them were very poor, but others were rich. Those who were rich gave their money to the apostles to give to the poor, that all might be alike. John Mark had an uncle (some say a cousin) called Barnabas, who belonged to Cyprus. He was a man both very good and very kind. He had property, but he sold it all and gave the money to the apostles. News came to Jerusalem that there were some believers at Antioch, and Barnabas was sent there to preach to them, and he took Saul (afterwards called Paul) to help him.

Now there was a great famine in Jerusalem, and the Christians in Antioch took up a collection for the poor and sent the money to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Paul. No doubt they both went to Mary's house as usual when they were there; and when the time came for them to return, they decided to take back with them a companion. He was not to preach like the apostles, but to attend to them, to make arrangements for their journeys, to look for lodgings and buy their food.

Here was a chance for John. He wanted to go out into the world, and take part in the great work. His uncle was willing to take him, and no doubt his mother was proud to let him go. So he went with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and was what they called their "minister."

After a time Paul and Barnabas were sent away on a missionary journey, and they took John Mark with them. They sailed first to the island of Cyprus, and preached there. Then they sailed to Asia Minor, and went inland to a place called Perga. From there they meant to go to a great many other places, preaching Christ. But at Perga John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. We are not told why he refused to go any farther. It was a long perilous journey that they meant to take, over the Taurus Mountains into a country where the inhabitants worshipped heathen gods. There were Jews in these heathen cities, but the Jews were the apostles' worst

enemies, and to go to preach Christ was to risk their lives. Whether it was the dangers that frightened John Mark, or whether he had some other reason, we do not know. At all events he went back to Jerusalem.

That was what John Mark did with his first chance. We do not hear anything more about him for three or four years. Paul and Barnabas decided to go on another missionary journey and revisit those cities where they had been. They needed a "minister" to go with them again, and John Mark was very anxious to go. Perhaps he was sorry he had thrown away the first chance. Perhaps he saw now that the work of spreading the Gospel was worth all the suffering it might bring. Very likely he admired his uncle more than ever for what he had done, and he was eager to take part in the new expedition. He asked Barnabas if he would take him, and Barnabas agreed, but when they spoke to Paul he absolutely refused. He was indignant at the idea of taking a man who had deserted them. Perhaps Barnabas understood his nephew's reasons better, or perhaps he knew he was sorry, so he said to Paul, "Come now, let us give the lad another chance." But it was no use, and the two friends actually quarrelled over it. Barnabas stood by Mark. Paul chose a man called Silas to go with him. They went one way, and Barnabas and Mark another. So Mark got his second chance.

What did he make of his second chance? We do not know anything about that journey with Barnabas.

The New Testament tells us nothing of it. Many years after, however, Paul was at Rome, in prison, waiting to be tried, and expecting to be put to death. He was deserted by most of his friends, but writing to the Colossians he mentions among the few he has left, who are his fellow-workers and a comfort to him, "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas," and bids them receive him well if he comes to them. In another letter he speaks of "Marcus, my fellow-labourer." And in the very last letter he wrote to Timothy, he says, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering."

So Barnabas was right after all. There was good stuff in Mark. He was worth another chance. And Paul knew it now, and admitted it. Among his best trusted friends whom he longed to have near him at his death was John Mark, whom he had once refused to have anything more to do with.

Besides comforting Paul and being his fellow-worker, Mark was a great deal with Peter, who loved him so much that he spoke of him as "my son." He is said to have been Peter's "interpreter," that is to say, he translated the apostle's words, when he preached, into Greek. After Peter's death he wrote down all he could remember of the apostle's preaching about Christ, and this is our second Gospel, "the Gospel according to St. Mark."

The New Testament does not tell us the rest of Mark's life; but tradition says that he went on preaching

Christ to the end of his days, that he became Bishop of Alexandria, and that he died a martyr's death. One story tells that when he was returning from a missionary journey to Aquileia his boat was driven by storms to the lagoons where Venice now stands. There it grounded on an island. And there an angel appeared to Mark and told him not to fear, for in that place there would one day arise to his honour a great city in which he would have many converts.

And so it came to pass. Some four hundred years after Mark's death the descendants of the converts whom he had made at Aquileia and other places near were forced by the Huns to flee for dear life. They landed where Mark's boat had stranded, and were among the founders of the city of Venice. Four centuries later still, in 829, the bones of St. Mark, as he was now called, were brought to Venice, and the magnificent Cathedral of St. Mark was built to hold them. There they rest to this day. And that great and glorious cathedral is a memorial to a man who took his second chance and turned a failure into a triumph.

STAND ON YOUR OWN FEET.

Stand upright on thy feet.—Acts xiv. 10.

I WONDER how many of you include the word "can't" in the list of words you use. It is a very stupid word, and does us no end of harm, and the sooner we get rid of it the better. I shouldn't have anything to do with it if I were you. I should just politely show it the front door!

Now I want to tell you about two boys who would not have anything to do with the word "can't"; and, curiously enough, they each became in after life President of the United States of America.

The first boy's name was Ulysses Grant. He could never bear to give up a difficult problem. Once a schoolfellow, seeing him very much puzzled over something he was studying, said, "You can't master that." "Can't," said Grant, "what does 'can't' mean?" "Oh it means that—well, you *can't*." But that answer did not satisfy Ulysses, so he went for the dictionary and hunted for the word, and of course he did not find it. Ever after, when he was told by anyone that he was attempting something he could not accomplish, he had

his answer ready—"The word 'can't' is not in the dictionary."

But Ulysses Grant was not one of the boys who merely said things and did not act up to them. He soon proved that the word "can't" was not in his vocabulary. From the time he was seven or eight he used to be sent by his father with a waggon and a team of horses to bring in some logs of wood from the forest. His father had men to cut and load the timber but Grant had to bring it home. One day, when he was about twelve years old, he arrived at the forest to find there was no one to load for him. He was determined not to be beaten, but how was a boy to lift a weight that strong men could scarcely move? Then his eye lighted upon one trunk which had fallen over another and that gave him an idea. He fastened the horses to the logs and got them to drag them up an inclined plane formed by a trunk, after which he managed to tilt them over into the waggon. So, quite unaided, he secured his load and brought it home.

That was the boy who was put in command of the forces of the North in the American Civil War and who was twice made President of the United States.

The other boy's name was James Garfield. He rose from a log cabin to the White House of the President. He was just a poor boy to begin with, living in a wooden hut, and running barefoot about the woods, but he had a wise mother who used to say to him, "Half the battle is in thinking you can do a thing."

So, from the time he was a little child Garfield could not bear to say, "I can't." His favourite expression was, "I can do that."

Now, perhaps you are wondering what all this has to do with our text. Well, the people who say "can't" are the people who are not able to stand upright on their feet, or, as we say, "they can't stand on their own feet." Indeed we sometimes wonder if they have any feet to stand on. We suppose they have, but they make so much use of other people's to support them that it is not surprising if we doubt if they have any of their own. They require constant propping up. They can't fasten their own buttons, they can't undo their own knots, they can't learn their own lessons, they can't put away their own toys, they can't amuse themselves, they can't think for themselves.

Now, if you want to grow to be men and women, you must put the word "can't" out of your vocabulary. You must learn to do things for yourselves. If you like, you can choose the other way—you can get other people to help you. It will be the easier way at the time, but in the long run it will be the harder. For there will come a day when you are obliged to stand on your own feet, when all support is withdrawn, and the chances are that you will wobble and collapse. Muscles that are not used grow useless, and if you don't practise standing on your own feet when you are young, you may never be able to walk at all.

But there is another way in which we have to stand

upright on our feet, and that is in facing temptation. We all have to stand alone against our temptations. Nobody else can face them for us, and the question is, Are we going to stand upright, or are we going to fall before them?

Now, although none of our earthly friends can face them for us, there is Somebody above who can help us to stand upright before them. Jesus became a man, and was "in all points tempted like as we are," so that He might understand what our temptations are, so that He might be able to sympathize with us, and help us.

Will you try to remember that, when you feel like falling before temptation, Jesus is close beside you, and He understands. If you stretch out a hand to Him, He will hold you up and make you able to stand upright upon your feet.

UPSIDE DOWN AND RIGHT SIDE UP.

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.—Acts xvii. 6.

WHEN we read those words I think our first inclination is to smile; they are such "upside down" words themselves. Here is a city mob led by the very rabble of the city, the habitual disturbers of the peace, and they are accusing a few quiet Christian missionaries of turning the world "upside down." But that is often the way in this world. When people are in the wrong they are very fond of blaming those who are in the right. They think they must be right themselves, so, naturally, everybody else must be wrong.

Of course these wild men didn't care one bit whether Paul and his friends were turning the world upside down or downside up. All they minded about was having an excuse to create a little disturbance. The people who really cared were the jealous Jews who had stirred them up to make the disturbance, so that they might get rid of the missionaries.

Paul and Silas and Timothy had come to Thessalonica —which is just the modern Salonika—to preach the

gospel. They had been showing the Jews how the prophets had foretold that Christ should suffer, and die, and rise again. But the Jews did not like their message. They had looked for a Messiah who should be an earthly king to lead them on to great victories. And they did not like the influence of the missionaries over the Gentiles who had adopted the Jewish religion, for a great many of these had believed Paul's message and become his followers. They were too wily and too dignified to create a disturbance themselves, but there were plenty of lazy good-for-nothings who would be glad to do it for them. So while they remained in the background, the rabble set the city in an uproar. And this was the accusation that they put in the mouth of the mob—"These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

Now the Jews were nearer the truth than they thought when they accused the apostles of turning the world "upside down," only they made one important mistake. The poor old world was already as upside down as it possibly could be, in fact it was standing on its head; and it was the message which the apostles brought that was going to turn it right side up.

I want you to think first of what turns the world upside down, and second of what is going to put it right again.

1. And first, What turns the world upside down? Of course there is just one answer to that, and it is

Sin." God did not mean the world to be upside down. He meant that it should be good, and beautiful, and noble; but sin entered and spoiled it. And what turns the world upside down is just what turns you and me upside down; for the world is made up of the men and women in it. When we are angry, when we are selfish, when we are untruthful, when we are disobedient or dishonourable, we are just upside down, and we are helping to keep the world upside down too.

2. But, second, What is going to turn the world right side up? Again we can answer in one word—"Love." Jesus Christ was just Love Incarnate, and it is the love which He sheds abroad in men's hearts that is going to set the old world right again.

When Christ came down to earth He found things in a sad state. The Romans were the conquerors of the world in those days and they were supposed to be highly civilized. Yet in the Colosseum at Rome men were torn to pieces by wild beasts while emperors and fine ladies looked on and applauded. Tiny babies were left outside the city gates to perish of cold and hunger. And when people grew old and frail and of no more use, they, too, were turned out to die. For the weak, and the poor, and the helpless, there was no pity and no help. There were no hospitals and no asylums. Slaves were over-burdened, ill-treated, tortured. And the worst of it all was that very few people thought there was anything amiss in these things.

But Jesus came into the world. He healed the sick, He comforted the sad, He blessed the little children. And wherever they went His followers tried to imitate Him. Gradually people came to have new ideas about things. Instead of neglecting and oppressing the weak and the helpless they began to try to help them.

And is the world still upside down? I'm afraid it is still pretty topsy-turvy, but very slowly and surely it is coming right. Sometimes we think it is going back a bit, but that is only because we are so short-sighted. God, who sees all, knows that it is coming right.

But we must do our part. Jesus Christ can set the world right, but He cannot do it without men to help Him. Every deed of love and kindness, every piece of self-sacrifice, every act of forgiveness, helps to turn it in the right direction.

The world can only come right side up when the men and women in it are right side up. So first we must get right ourselves by letting the love of Jesus into our hearts to drive out all that is bad, and then we can help to put the world right by loving and serving others.

SOMETHING NEW.

Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.—Acts xvii. 21.

If I showed you a map of Europe I suppose most of you could point out the city of Athens. You know that it is the capital of Greece and is situated on the Gulf of Ægina. You also know that it is celebrated for its beauty and antiquity, and that Edinburgh has often been called "the modern Athens" on account of its beauty.

But I didn't come here to give you a geography lesson. I want to tell you something about the Athenians in St. Paul's time.

Once upon a time Athens was the centre of learning and art and beauty. It was noted for its wonderful buildings, for its famous statesmen, for its philosophers, its poets, its sculptors. Perhaps the world owes more to Athens in the way of culture than it does to any other city. When our forefathers were savages, living in dens or caves or rude huts, the Athenians were giving to the world their poetry, their learning, and their culture.

But when St. Paul came to Athens its glory had departed. The city was not less beautiful than it had

been. Magnificent palaces and fine statues and temple-crowned hills were still to be seen. The sun still shone as brilliantly, the sea was still as gloriously blue, as it had been in the days of yore. But the people had changed. There were no longer any famous men in Athens; and the Athenians, instead of devoting themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and poetry and art, "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." They rushed after the latest craze, but as soon as the novelty had worn off they tired of it and deserted it for the next new thing. It was this love of new things that was sapping the very life of Athens. Her glory lay in the past, and the Athenians were content to let it rest there. For the present their chief concern was the latest sensation, the most recent idea.

Now I want you to notice three things, and the first is that mere talkers and listeners never accomplish any great thing. It is not the boy who talks but the boy who acts that counts. The boy who boasts of what he will do generally fails when the test comes. And it is all very well to glow with enthusiasm and pride when we hear of noble and brave deeds; but if our enthusiasm does not carry us any farther, if it does not help us to be noble too and to bear bravely the little troubles that come our way, then it has been all in vain.

And the second thing I want you to notice is that those who are constantly rushing from one thing to

another never accomplish any one thing well. It is easy enough to begin with enthusiasm, but the thing that counts is keeping on to the end. If we set out to learn a game it won't do just to play a few times and then give it up. If we want really to excel we must peg away at it and get through a lot of drudgery.

Some of you are constantly changing your hobbies. You tease your father and mother for rabbits, or a canary, or a kitten; but are you quite as keen on them when you have owned them for a few weeks? Are you sure they wouldn't die of starvation if somebody else didn't feed them? And some of you are constantly changing your friends. You are "friends" with a boy or a girl one day and have fallen out with them the next, and so you never make a real friend.

And if it is so with your games, and your hobbies, and your friendships, how is it with your work? It is a splendid thing to have a nice clean fresh copy-book and to try to write in it better than in the old one, but it is a more splendid thing to keep on writing well to the end. Perseverance always wins the day. It wins against mere brilliance. One day the late Mr. Chamberlain was talking to a man who was bright, but lazy—who often began things well but seldom finished them. Mr. Chamberlain gave this man some good advice. "My dear boy," he said, "observe the postage stamp. After you have put the stamp on a letter, it sticks to that one thing till it gets there."

Lastly, I want you to remember that old things are

often the best. We return to the old toys and the old books when we are tired of the new ones. And as we grow up we sometimes think that the old home is the dearest place on earth, and the old friends are the best. Of course if we were always going to stick to old things we should never make progress, but we must be sure that the new thing is better before we reject the old for it.

And remember that the grandest, most wonderful thing in the world is nearly two thousand years old—the old, old story of the love of Jesus and of how He came to earth to give His life for us that we might live with Him forever. That story is very old, and yet the wonderful thing about it is that it is always new. It is new for every boy and girl who comes into the world, just as if it had been written for them alone. And Jesus wishes every one of you to claim that story as your own, and to share in the joy of His love.

BONFIRES.

Not a few of them that practised curious arts brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.—Acts xix. 19.

If you went through the streets of Edinburgh after dark on Victoria Day, you would catch sight of a bonfire at almost every turn. The fires make a very fine effect when looked at from a distance. That is because of the character of the city. Its romantic situation gives a set-off to anything grand like a fire, or a great storm. I have known an artist watch the Victoria Day bonfires from a high window for more than an hour.

But go near to one of the bonfires, and you will see what ugly things are being burnt—old clothes, old bedding, old broken furniture. One would think that some people had been clearing their houses of everything old and useless, a sort of preliminary to a great spring-cleaning which would make their homes sweet, and clean, and pleasant to live in. The children of the Edinburgh streets love running about in the glare of the firelight. They look forward to Victoria Day, and that chiefly because of these bonfires.

I wonder if children ran round the wonderful bonfire that was kindled in Ephesus when Paul was preaching there. I scarcely think so. If you had been there, you would have seen men and women standing gazing with a strangely earnest expression on their faces. This bonfire, like the other, meant a clearing out of things from their homes, but things that had cost them a great deal of money. Learned men say that these books were worth nearly £2000 of our money. There was a great meaning in this bonfire: it meant a crisis in the lives of the onlookers. What had brought it about?

Ephesus was thought to be the most beautiful city in Asia Minor, just as Edinburgh is the most beautiful city in Great Britain. But it was full of the temples of heathen gods, and a great many of the inhabitants believed in them. They had also got interested in curious and evil arts, such as sorcery, magic, and witchcraft. Paul had been preaching in the city, and he was a man who was firmly convinced of the truth of his own beliefs—just the very kind of preacher for people like the Ephesians. Besides preaching, Paul had, by the help of God, been able to work miracles as great as, even greater than, anything achieved by their so-called magic. The Ephesians were fascinated, many were convinced and converted, they were ready to give up everything for the sake of the gospel. They brought their books which were about magic and similar subjects, and made a great bonfire of them. They wanted to be done with evil arts and to begin life anew

—to turn over a new leaf. Henceforth they were to trust in Jesus Christ. The bonfire was to show that they were in earnest.

Hundreds of years afterwards, there was another great bonfire—this time in Florence. Savonarola had awakened many of the Florentines to thinking about their souls. Like those Ephesians, they made a bonfire. Boys had a part in the making of this one. Dressed in white robes they went from house to house, collecting what they called "Vanities." You will understand the meaning of the term, when I mention some of the articles that were given to be added to the huge pyramid, which, when the darkness had come, was set on fire—costly but bad books and pictures; playing-cards, dice, and other apparatus for gambling; music-books, and musical instruments. There were also things that spoke of the vanity of the women—rouge pots, false-hair, mirrors, perfumes, powders, and veils. All these things were given up under the influence of the great and holy man Savonarola. He saw that the people were forgetting God in their folly, and even in their learning; and he wanted them to turn over a new leaf.

Let me tell you the story of someone else who gave up much for Christ's sake. He is—for he was alive quite recently—a Zulu chief. Thirty years ago he heard from the lips of a missionary how Christ had died for him. He thought about it till he could think of nothing else. Then one day he came to the mission-

ary and renounced all that makes life pleasant to an African chief. He gave up his crown, his wealth, his despotic rule over thousands, his power of life and death over the whole tribe. He saw that, remaining a king, he could not be true to his new-found conscience. Now he is an old man living in a humble hut. But he is happy. He has never regretted the sacrifice he made; and he rejoices in all he has suffered for Jesus' sake.

Boys and girls, these people really made bonfires of their old lives, that they might win Jesus Christ. What can you give up? You know that in your hearts and minds there is sometimes a great deal of evil—conceit, bad-temper, and untruthfulness. You cannot ask Jesus Christ to abide with you if you continue to give house room to that sort of thing. Make a bonfire of the evil in your heart.

And kindle your bonfire with prayer. You will need Jesus to help you, for without Him it is impossible to give up the evil that is in one's heart. Boys and girls, do it now, for if you put off, the chances are that the evil habits will in time conquer you.

SLEEPY-HEAD.

As Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep Eutychus fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead.—Acts xx. 9.

Of all the meetings mentioned in the Acts, I think this one held at Troas and addressed by Paul is one of the most interesting. What gives it a very special interest is the fact that a lad was there who was very like some of the boys who come to church here every Sunday morning.

Try to imagine yourselves at Troas. It was a city on the shores of the Hellespont, and in the midst of the tract of country where Troy once stood. Here Homer's famous heroes lived long, long ago; and here also, in New Testament times, Paul preached some of his wonderful sermons. You sometimes go away from church saying "What a long sermon!" But what would you say to a meeting that went on till past midnight and was followed by another that did not break up till daylight was shining in at the windows.

I don't believe that the people who were listening to Paul ever grew tired; they were so interested in what the great apostle was saying. The sermons he preached

were always about Jesus Christ, and what He had said when on earth; and already it had begun to dawn upon many people that through Christ's life on earth a great change was going to be wrought upon the whole world. No wonder they listened.

Some of them had brought their young friends to the meeting. One of these was a lad called Eutychus. He had looked out for a seat at the open window, for there was a great crowd. There were many lights, we are told; that, of course, on a warm April night would make the room very close. In spite of his being seated where he was, Eutychus became drowsy. The friend who had brought him to the meeting must have wanted to nudge him when he began to nod. Suddenly poor Eutychus swayed backwards, overbalanced, and fell into the street below. There was a great cry raised, and the sermon came to an abrupt conclusion. Paul and many of the people went down at once to find out how it fared with him. Eutychus seemed beyond human aid. "Poor boy, poor boy," the women lamented. But Paul knew better. "Do not distress yourselves," he said, taking Eutychus in his arms, "for his life is in him."

The meeting was resumed, and the company joined in partaking of the Lord's Supper. It must have been very solemn. When daybreak came, the meeting was still going on; then, we are told, they brought the lad alive and were not a little comforted. Eutychus would never forget that early April morning; and he would remember Paul's kindness best of all.

We cannot altogether blame Eutychus for falling asleep; besides being in a close room, he may have done a hard day's work before going to the meeting. I believe Luke has given us the story because of Paul's tact, and his wonderful power over Eutychus, who, if not dead, must certainly have been very near it. But we cannot help saying to ourselves, "What a pity for a young lad to sleep through such a meeting!"

You know how some people go through the world paying little or no attention to the great things going on around them. You don't want to be like them, do you? There is a text which fits the present time very well, "It is high time to awake out of sleep." We want you all to be eager men and women, listening to the voice of God as it speaks in the great changes that are being wrought in our country to-day. When such things are adoing don't allow yourselves to be sleepy-heads.

THE LAND OF BY-AND-BY.

A convenient season.—Acts xxiv. 25.

I WANT to speak to-day to those who are dwelling in By-and-by land. Most of us go there on a visit at times, and some of us stay there nearly always. It seems a very pleasant land to dwell in just at first. The flowers have a sweet perfume, and the soft winds lull us to sleep. It is the land of "take things easy." You don't need to bother yourself to do anything disagreeable. But some day you wake up to find the land has changed its name. Its new name is "Lost Opportunity," and it is the saddest name any land could bear.

With dreamy nooks and gleams of sky,
And wild flowers, sweet for fingering,
The blossomy lane of "By-and-by"
Goes winding, loitering, lingering;
Till, after many a green delay,
It crosses "Dead Endeavour,"
And reaches, in the gloaming grey,
The haunted house of "Never."

Who are the people who live in By-and-by land? They are the people who put off doing things that are disagreeable or that will give them a little trouble.

They don't mean not to do those things, but they tell you not to ask them to do them *now*. They will do them to-morrow or some other time—at a more convenient season. And when to-morrow comes, oh, well, they will do them the next day, and so the things never get done at all, or get done too late. They have a sort of comfortable feeling, these people, that a thing put off is just as good as done; whereas the truth of the matter is that a thing put off is just as good as not done.

I think it is when we are young that we are most tempted to wander into By-and-by land. We imagine we have plenty of time for everything; life stretches away before us like a long, long road. And that is why it is so difficult for boys and girls to realize how very, very dangerous it is to dwell in By-and-by land. "Plenty of time" means "no time." Life is much shorter than it looks, and it is packed so full that we really have not a minute to waste.

I want to tell you a Russian legend about a woman who lost her opportunity because she put off to a convenient season. In this country it is Santa Claus who fills the Christmas stockings, but in Russia it is an old woman called Baboushka, and this is her story.

It is said that the Wise Men from the East who were following the star came one evening to the house of Baboushka, who was then young and beautiful. They told her their errand and asked her to accompany them. And Baboushka replied, "I will come with you when I have set my house in order, but not now."

So the men went on their way. And when Baboushka had finished her task she set out to follow them. But not a sign of men or star could she see. She wandered on over hill and vale seeking the Christ-child, but all in vain. And still she wanders. At Christmas time she carries gifts to the little children, because she hopes in one of them to find the Christ-child whom once she might have found so easily; but she is doomed to disappointment.

The story of Baboushka is very like the story of the man in our text. He had heard Paul preaching and he came very near to following Jesus then and there. But he put off. He said he would send for Paul again at a convenient season, but the convenient season never came, and the man who might have become a great disciple of Christ sank back into his mean and wicked ways.

Boys and girls, Jesus is calling you now to follow Him. Don't put off till a convenient season; don't linger in the land of By-and-by. The danger is that if you put off now you will put off always. And you will miss the greatest thing in your life if you miss Jesus Christ.

CHILDREN OF THE SOUTH WIND.

The south wind blew softly.—Acts xxvii. 13.

To-day we are going to have a talk about South-wind people.

Now, of course, the South wind is the exact opposite of the North wind, and so, as you might expect, South-wind people are in many ways the exact opposite of North-wind people. When we speak of a South wind, we generally think of a soft, gentle breeze. It brings to our minds summer and flowers and new-mown grass, just as the North wind recalls to us frost and snow and storms. So the children of the South wind are quiet, gentle, and easy-going, and they are to be found more frequently among the girls than among the boys.

Now we could not get along without our South-wind people any more than we could without our North-wind friends. They are very soothing and very lovable, and it is among them that you must look for the peace-makers of the world.

But the South-wind people are not perfect any more than are their North-wind cousins, and they are more likely to spoil their lives by their defects than are the children of any other wind.

The great danger of the South-wind people lies in their softness. They are too yielding, too easily led. Things which would just create opposition in a North-wind person and make him don all his armour, easily gain the victory over them. They don't like to say "no"; they don't like to make a fuss; they don't like to be unpopular. And so they give in to temptation rather than make a stand.

I know that there are some gentle people who are much more determined and much more difficult to move than the noisy ones are, but I am not thinking of them to-day. I am thinking of the easy-going folk who allow themselves to drift rather than make an effort to resist.

And then the children of the South wind are a little —just a little—inclined to laziness. It is a way South winds have. When that wind begins to blow, a sleepy, lazy feeling comes over us. We want to close our books and go out to the garden or into the country to drink in the soft, sweet breezes.

And so South-wind people are rather self-indulgent and fond of ease. They are a little wanting in backbone; they won't stick in; they are lacking in perseverance. And the result is that those who have less ability easily pass them in the race of life. Don't you think it is a pity they should be defeated just for the want of a little effort? Don't you think it is a pity that all their splendid talent should be lost to the world?

For it is from among our South-wind people that we

get so many of our poets and our painters. Just because of their dreaminess they can see things that those of us with ordinary everyday eyes cannot see.

Oh, South-wind people, don't waste your lives! Don't throw away your gifts! If you only *will*, you can make the world more beautiful for us than can the children of any other wind that blows. For you come from the land of sunshine, and you can make the flowers to blossom and the little birds to sing.

In the Book of Job we have a picture of the South wind at its worst. It is a picture of a sirocco—the terrible sultry wind which comes from the burning desert and silences and stills everything before it. The sky is like brass; not a leaf stirs; the birds hide in the thickest shades; the flocks and herds take shelter in caves. The hot, dry breath of the air seems to burn and scorch to the very bone. And that is a picture, too, of what South-wind people may become. They may fritter away their lives till they come to nothingness and desolation. All the joy and beauty of life may depart from them.

But in the Song of Songs there is another picture—a picture of the South wind blowing upon a garden and filling the air with the scent of sweet spices. And that is a picture of the South wind at its best.

Boys and girls of the South wind, Jesus can make your lives fragrant. It is He alone who can save you from the dangers of your nature. He can smooth away the rough corners of the North-wind people,

and He can make you strong and brave. Some of the South-wind people have become the noblest of men and women. And what He has done before He can do again. He can turn your softness into firmness, your weakness into strength, your flaws into beauty.

Boys and girls of the South wind, won't you give Him a chance?[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are: Ex. x. 19, xiv. 21, Ezek. i. 4.

A BUNDLE OF STICKS.

A bundle of sticks.—Acts xxviii. 3.

You can all tell what this is—a bundle of sticks such as we gather to make a fire when we go for a picnic. But I wonder how many of you can say where a bundle of sticks is mentioned in the Bible? If you don't know, I should like you to look it up when you go home. I am going to tell you the story of it, and that will help you to guess where to search.

St. Paul was being taken as a prisoner to Rome when a terrible storm arose and the ship was cast ashore upon the island of Malta. The passengers and crew were all saved, but the vessel was broken to pieces. Fortunately the people of the island were friendly, and when they saw the shipwrecked men shivering in their wet clothes they did a very sensible thing—they kindled a fire. But of course a fire kindled needs to be fed or it will soon go out; so Paul, the practical, set about gathering a bundle of sticks.

If I did not want to speak to you about the sticks themselves, we might have quite a long talk about Paul's common sense. He did not sit down to bemoan his misfortune. He set about at once to look for a remedy. Here were two hundred and seventy-six

soaking people, and the main thing was to get them dry as soon as possible, so he must find the means to keep up the fire. And I have no doubt many of the others when they saw him working followed his good example. Paul had no stupid notions about things being beneath his dignity. He was not ashamed to turn his hand to anything. Whatever he did—whether it was preaching a sermon, or making tents, or gathering sticks—he did it with all his might.

Now, there are many different kinds of bundles of sticks. There are the neat bundles that we get from the grocer for lighting our fires, and there are the rather untidy looking bundles that we gather at picnics. There are the sticks the gardener uses to tie up his plants, and there are the bundles of brushwood with which he shields the tender seedlings from the cold spring winds.

You have sometimes heard your friends say of somebody, "Oh, she's just a stick!" And when they say that, they don't mean anything very complimentary. They mean that the person of whom they are speaking is stiff, and unbending, and uninteresting. Now I always think when I hear people talking in that way that they are being rather hard on the poor sticks. There is a great deal of good in sticks, so much that I should like you all to be sticks.

Let us think of some of the things that sticks do.

First of all, *they light fires and help to keep them alight.* You know how cheery it is on a cold winter's

night to gather round a big blazing fire with a glowing log in the middle of it. Well, I think people who are kind and cheerful are just like that blazing log; they send a sort of glow about our hearts. Wouldn't you like to be this kind of stick?

But there is another thing sticks do—*they give support.* And I should like you to be this kind of stick too. I am thinking this time of the sticks the gardener uses to tie up his plants. If it were not for them many of the frail plants would get broken and dashed to pieces by the wind. How can we be a support? By helping to bear the burden of others. Would you like to hear the story of how one man bore another's burden?

In the year 1780, fifty English officers were taken prisoner and confined at Seringapatam by Tippoo Sahib, Sultan of Mysore. They were treated with such cruelty that many of them died. The Sultan sent to Seringapatam fifty sets of fetters—one for each man; but amongst the men was a young officer—Captain Baird—who was so badly wounded that it would almost certainly have killed him to wear the chains. What was to be done? The Sultan had sent fifty sets and fifty sets must be put on. Another officer named Captain Lucas came to the rescue and offered to bear his friend's load as well as his own. And for many weary months, in the stifling heat of that Indian prison, he wore two sets of fetters, until at length the prisoners were liberated.

Perhaps we haven't the opportunity to do a grand

deed like Captain Lucas, but when we are kind to those who are weaker than ourselves, when we dry the tears of those who are sad, when we take care of the little ones for mother, run her messages, and are bright and obedient, we, too, are doing something to lighten the burden of another.

Once when a great ship was being launched she stuck on the ways. A small boy who was standing near laid his shoulder against the side of the huge vessel saying, "I can push a pound." That was all that was required. Swiftly the ship began to move, and soon she was floating safely on the water.

You may not be able to lift a big burden, but you can all push a pound, and there is no saying what you may accomplish by so doing.

I want to speak about one more purpose for which sticks are used—*protection.* We are told that the sticks Paul gathered were brushwood, and those are just the sort of sticks the gardener uses for protecting his young plants. Sometimes he lays them on the ground in the winter to keep the cold away from the roots. Sometimes he makes a kind of hedge of them to shield the tender green shoots from the cold spring winds. They stand between the weak things and the things that would hurt them. This was what the knights used to do long ago—they rode forth to defend the weak and helpless; this is what our British soldiers and sailors are still ready to do; and this is what our best British boys and girls are ready to do too. It's a fine thing to be strong, but it's a finer thing to use our

strength well. Let us see to it that no small child is bullied in our presence, and that no helpless animal is ill-treated.

There is just one thing more I want you to notice. When Paul was gathering sticks he picked up a viper among them. The creature had made itself look so like a stick that he had not noticed it. It was numb with the cold, but the heat of the fire restored it, and springing out it fastened on Paul's hand.

Now what I want to say is—*don't be a viper, and pretend to be a stick.* Not only was the viper no use for keeping the fire alight, but it tried to do all the harm it could. There are some things in us that, if we don't take care, will turn us into vipers although we may appear to be good useful sticks. There are the beginnings of envy, and malice, and selfishness, and discontent. The best way is to get rid of them when they are small, and to ask Jesus to put in their place love, and kindness, and unselfishness, and thoughtfulness for others.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

After three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers.—Acts xxviii. 11.

SHIPS in ancient times had, as a rule, two figures attached to them. In the front of the ship was the figure-head, after which the ship was named. In the stern was the image of the god who was supposed to guard the vessel. The ship in which St. Paul sailed had two in the stern, the images of the gods Castor and Pollux.

Do you know the Greek legend about Castor and Pollux? They were twin brothers, the sons of Zeus, the king of the gods. But although they were brothers, there was a great difference between them, for Pollux was immortal but Castor was not.

The two brothers were very much attached to each other, and they shared many adventures together; but at last Castor was killed in battle. Then Pollux sorrowed so much for his brother that he wished he might die too, but he could not, because he was immortal. He went to Zeus and begged him to make him a mortal man, that he might die and go to Hades to join his beloved brother. But Zeus could not do

that. However, on account of his great love for Castor, and because he could not be happy away from him, Pollux got permission to spend every second day with Castor. So he spent one day among the gods, and the next day in Hades where the dead were.

Another story says that as a reward for their great love for each other the brothers were fixed as stars in the sky. Those stars are called the Gemini, or the Heavenly Twins. Both in Greece and in Italy it was believed that Castor and Pollux, always together, came riding on white horses to help soldiers on the battle-field, and to gain the victory for those who called on them. They were also supposed to protect sailors in storms. That is why it was common to find their images in boats.

This beautiful story of brotherly love and loyalty reminds us of a true story. We are mortals like Castor, but we have a great immortal Brother. And He loved us so much that He could not be happy without us, but came down from Heaven to seek us, His little mortal brothers. More than that, He showed us the way back with Him, that we might live with Him in heaven forever.

The brother knew well the castle old,
Every closet, each outlook fair,
Every turret and bartizan bold,
Every chamber, garnished or bare.
The brother was out in the heavenly air;
Little ones lost the starry way,
Wandered down the dungeon stair.
The brother missed them, and on the clay

Of the dungeon-floor he found them all.
Up they jumped when they heard him call!
He led the little ones into the day—
Out and up to the sunshine gay,
Up to the father's own door-sill—
In at the father's own room door,
There to be merry and work and play,
There to come and go at their will,
Good boys and girls to be lost no more![1]

[1] G. MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 308.

CHAINS.

Because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.—Acts xxviii. 20.

HAVE you ever tried what it feels like to be fastened to another person by a rope or a chain? Some of you have run three-legged races, and that was great fun because you were doing it for sport, and because you never tried it for more than a few minutes at a time. But if you were fastened day and night to another person for two years—never able to move farther than the length of the chain unless they allowed you to do so—don't you think you would grow rather tired of it?

Well, that was St. Paul's position for two years in Rome. He lived in his own "hired" house and might have his friends come in to see him, but his house was really a prison. He was not permitted to leave it, and he was always guarded by a soldier whose wrist was fastened to his wrist by a chain. Every few hours the soldier on duty was changed. Some of them might be kind and allow Paul to walk about his house, but others would be inconsiderate and make him stay in one room.

Now, although we have not to wear iron chains like Paul, we are all more or less bound by invisible chains

that keep us from going where we should like to go and from doing what we should like to do. Some of them are good chains and some of them are bad.

The first chain I want to speak about is *home.*

Sometimes we are inclined to fret about the rules and limitations of home. Sometimes we get cross and annoyed because we are not allowed to do what we want, or what other boys and girls do. But be sure mother has some good reason for forbidding you to do that thing, and some day you will thank her for it.

And there is another sense in which home is a chain. Some day you will grow up and go out into the world. And then you will find that the memory of a good home is like a chain holding you back from what is mean, or bad, or unworthy.

The second chain is the chain of *circumstances.* Sometimes we dream of the splendid things we should do if we were rich or powerful. What beautiful presents we should give to the people we loved! What lovely surprise gifts we should send to those who had few of this world's goods! What a number of wrongs we should right.

Now I think St. Paul was bound in that Roman house by the chain of circumstances just as much as by fetters of iron. He was a man who had been accustomed to go where he liked; he had travelled a great deal from place to place both by land and by sea; he had a passion for missionary work; yet there he was—tied to one house for two long years.

What did Paul do with his chain? He made the best of it, and he made such splendid use of it that he perhaps did more good in those two years at Rome than he did in any other two years of his life.

First of all there were the soldiers who were chained to him. He taught them about Jesus. Now soldiers, you know, are moved from place to place, and many of these soldiers carried the news of the gospel to far-distant parts of the Roman Empire.

Then there were his own special friends, who visited him—Luke, and Timothy, and John Mark. He comforted and helped them.

And there were the Jews and Gentiles in the city who came to see him, and to whom he preached about Jesus of Nazareth.

Besides all that, Paul wrote in Rome some very beautiful letters to the Christians in other places. It was from there that he sent the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and to Philemon.

So you see the chain of our circumstances is really a blessing in disguise if we make the right use of it. We are in the very best place we could be, and the place where for the present we can do the most good.

But there is another chain by which we are more or less bound, the chain of *bad habits*. When we are small those chains are just like tiny silken ropes, but as we grow older, they increase in strength until they become terrible steel fetters. Now, unlike the chains

of home and circumstances, these are chains we ought to try to get rid of, and the sooner we begin the better, so that we may break them before they grow strong.

And how are we going to break them? Well, of course, we must try with all our strength to do so, but that is not enough. If we are going to trust to our own strength we may never be able to break them at all.

Have you ever heard the legend of the knight and the wonderful stone? This knight was captured by the Saracens in the Holy Land and flung into a dungeon to die. A nightingale used to come and perch on the window of his prison and cheer him by her song. The knight fed her with some of his own scanty fare, and one evening he said to her, "Ah, sweet bird! If only you could help me to escape!" The nightingale flew away and was gone for three days. The knight thought she had been killed by some hawk, but on the evening of the third day she returned bearing in her beak a stone. The knight took the stone, and, by accident, touched his fetters with it. They fell off him. Then he went to the dungeon door and touched that also. The door flew open, and the knight left his prison and managed to escape to England.

We need to touch our bad habits with the magic stone of the love and the power of Jesus, and they will fall off us.

A CONTRADICTION.

The good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise.—Rom. vii. 19.

THAT seems a very queer thing, doesn't it? Here is a man who doesn't do what he wants to do, and does do what he dislikes doing, and there is nobody but himself to blame.

But when you come to look at it, is it so queer after all? Do you never do the same? One morning you rise determined that you will get the better of that hasty temper of yours. And before breakfast is over, somebody says something that annoys you; and before you can say "Jack Robinson," there you are again, blazing away like a furnace. When you cool down, you feel very ashamed and annoyed with yourself, but somehow the day seems spoiled. You did not mean to do it or wish to do it, but—you did it. The evil which you would not, that you practise.

Or another day you resolve that you are going to be kinder, more helpful and obliging. And you start off all right. When your small brother asks you to play with him, you don't refuse or say, "Oh, bother!" You go and do it although you can't help thinking it's a silly game. But later in the day you get engrossed

in an exciting book, and when mother asks you to go upstairs for her eyeglasses you take five minutes to get off your chair, and when you do go you groan and grumble like a badly-oiled cart wheel. And when your sister asks you to help her out of a difficulty with a sum, you tell her she can "jolly well" help herself out of her own difficulties! And all the time something is tugging at you uncomfortably inside and telling you you can do better than that. You see you are like the man in the text again. You want to do well but—you don't. The good which you would you do not.

Now I wonder why this is? Well, it's just because there are two "yous" within you—the good "you" and the bad "you." The good "you" means well, but the bad "you" is a traitor and often betrays the good "you."

Is there any cure for this state of things? Yes, I think there are two cures, but the second is no good whatsoever without the first, so you must be sure to take the first first.

The first cure is to ask Jesus to make you anew and fill you with His Spirit so that you may not only desire good things but be able to do them.

There is a beautiful legend about a wonderful musical instrument which was kept in a baronial castle. It was so complicated that nobody could play upon it, and by and by it became red with rust and clogged with dust. Many people tried to remove the

dust and put it right again, but they all failed because they did not understand it. Then one day the maker of the instrument came. He cleared away the dust and rust and set the strings right, and soon the old castle was filled with the most exquisite music.

That is what Jesus can do with you. You are like a wonderful instrument capable of producing the most beautiful music. But something has gone wrong and you bring forth only discord. When other people try to put you right they only blunder, and when you try to put yourself right you fail miserably. But one day Jesus comes and He understands you. He knows what a splendid instrument you really are and what beautiful music you can produce if you will give yourself into His hands. He alone holds the secret of how it can be done, and if you let Him touch you—instead of discord, there will be melody.

But, second, you must keep on trying. You must not expect that you are to fold your hands and allow everything to be done for you. You have Jesus' battles to fight as well as your own. That old, bad self will want to get the better of you and you must fight it down. You may not always win, but the great question is, Are you always fighting, or are you giving up?

The natives of Korea have a curious custom. When they want to do away with a fault, they wait till New Year's day and then they write the name of the fault on a kite—and let the kite fly away up into the sky

They imagine that the fault has vanished with the kite.

We can't get rid of our faults all in one day like that, and perhaps it is better that we can't. Our hindrances and temptations are meant to make us stronger, and kinder, and braver. We may fail again and again and have to take back our instruments to Jesus many a time to get them retuned. The main thing is to keep on trying. We are sure to win in the end of the day.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.—Rom. viii. 37.

You boys and girls have heard a great deal about battles. You have been told stories of battles lost, and of battles gained.

When the War first began the word conqueror was in everybody's mouth. Later, however, things changed. That was, I think, because we and our Allies had learned a lesson.

After the war between France and Germany in 1870 the French Empress Eugenie said a very wise thing, wiser perhaps than one would have then given her credit for. The Germans had conquered the French and were insisting on the surrender of territory by the French. "I think," she said, "they (the Germans) must feel they have undertaken a difficult task. But conquerors never stop."

The boys here know about school fights. A certain boy has a quarrel with a schoolfellow; he fights over it and wins. He has got a taste of victory, it is exhilarating, the feeling of the conqueror is in his blood; but he is not satisfied, he wants to fight again. The "top-dog" boy, however, is not always a hero; the boy who

will not lift his hand to strike may be braver in every sense of the word.

It was said of John Bright, the great statesman, that "if he had not been a Quaker, he would have been a prize-fighter." Quakers did not believe in fighting, but John Bright was one of the bravest of men, and the day is coming when I believe there will be a code of honour which will make fighting a disgrace, not only at school but throughout the whole world.

Paul used the expression "more than conquerors" in a letter to the Roman Christians. If any people knew about battles the Romans did. Fighting was second nature with them. Therefore it must have been hard for them to understand what the apostle meant when he used the expression "more than conquerors." They only knew a fight that went on to a finish.

The lessons Jesus Christ had taught men and women were new to the Romans. They were new even to many of our own soldiers in the recent war. On the way to the Dardanelles an army chaplain one evening invited the men on board ship to a meeting in their own dining-room. An officer, a friend of the chaplain, offered the men a bargain. He would give them twenty minutes in which he would tell them of the fighting in which he had taken part, if they would listen for twenty minutes to the chaplain preaching the gospel! The arrangement was accepted and carried out. The officer gave a thrilling account of the operations that led to his wounding and temporary retirement from the field. Especially interesting was his de-

scription of the arts and dodges of the snipers. Such exciting fare might have indisposed the lads to tolerate a sermon. It seemed to have the opposite effect. Perhaps it helped them to realize more clearly what lay before them. They turned with unabated interest to hear how men may be made "more than conquerors." Then they stayed to ask questions, and seek guidance.

Paul was not writing about such fighting as the men had at the Dardanelles. It was about the battle every boy and girl here must take part in, the battle within themselves. There is something evil in the nature of every one which must be fought and conquered—more than conquered, Paul said, before we can go straight on along the path of this life to the better one that is to follow.

In your fight, boys and girls, you must be like a man who masters a very fine horse. He has such a mastery over the animal that he does not need to look at it, he can look away beyond to the road over which he has to go. He is more than conqueror over the animal he drives.

"More than conquerors through him that loved us." That is how you should start life.

First, because not one of you wants to go in for a losing game.

Second, because it makes the happiest life.

Third, because you will have a Friend to help you to earn the right to be happy. With Him beside you your religion will become so natural to you that you will be as unconscious of it as a strong man is of his good health.

WISE OR OTHERWISE.

Be not wise in your own conceits.—Rom. xii. 16.

THE other day I visited a farmyard. Near the barn a mother hen was clucking softly to a fine brood of chickens as she taught them to pick up seeds of grain. In the mill-pond a few young ducklings were enjoying their first lessons in swimming. But up and down before the farmhouse strutted a large turkey. His tail was well spread out, and he thought himself a very fine fellow indeed; but when he spoke his voice was by no means musical, and as he swaggered along I thought, "Poor old man, you imagine the place belongs to you and that you are the most important person on the farm, but you'll be sadly disillusioned when you find yourself in a pot next Christmas!"

Perhaps you may think it is a funny thing to get a text from a turkey, but that silly young bird really gave me a text, so he has done some good after all, besides providing somebody's future Christmas dinner. "Conceited as a turkey-cock," we say, and then the words that St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome came into my mind—"Be not wise in your own conceits." The Greek words just mean, "Be not wise at your own bar," that is, the bar of your own judgment.

Don't be too pleased with yourself. Don't think that you are always right and that you know everything that is worth knowing. In other words, don't have too good an opinion of yourself.

Now please notice carefully that I didn't say, "Don't have *a good opinion* of yourself," but, "Don't have *too good an opinion* of yourself." It's not at all a bad thing to have a good opinion of ourselves, to have a just pride in ourselves. The boys and girls who have the right kind of pride will be kept from doing many mean and unworthy things. But having too good an opinion of ourselves is another matter. It means puffing ourselves up to believe that we are what we are not, that we know everything when we know next to nothing; and if we only think of it, it makes us look just as ludicrous as that silly turkey in the farmyard.

I am going to give you three reasons why we should not be wise in our own conceits, and I shall give you the least good reason first and end with the best.

The first reason is, that *we shall get ourselves disliked.* There is no more detested person than the one who thinks he knows much better, or is much better, than anybody else, and that everybody else who thinks differently is wrong. A wise Chinese writer once said, "Be strictly correct yourself; but do not cut and carve other people." If all the flowers were the same colour the world would be a very uninteresting place, and if everybody thought alike it would be a very dull one. Certainly have your own opinion, but always give the

other boy the right to hold his, and be ready to own sometimes that he is right and you are wrong.

And the second reason is, that if we are wise in our own conceits *it will hinder us from learning.* It is a curious thing, but you will find as you go through the world that the people who know most are generally those who think they know least. And the reason is that they are the people who have found out how much there really is to know. A great pianist feels how difficult it is to do justice to the beauty of the music he is playing, a great artist how impossible to represent all the beauty he sees.

Once a cardinal was walking in one of the streets of Rome and he met an old bent man trudging along in the snow. "Where are you going," said the cardinal. "To the school of sculpture," replied the other. The old man was none other than Michael Angelo, the famous sculptor who carved some of the most beautiful statues in the world. Yet, though he could teach the world, he was ready to be taught.

So don't be ashamed to learn. It's the people who recognize their ignorance who make progress. Every day we live in this wonderful world there is something new to learn, if we keep our minds open to receive it.

And don't think you know better than people who have lived half a century. Your father and mother may not be so well able as you are to conjugate a Latin verb or translate a French sentence, but they know a great deal more of the things that are really worth

knowing, and you will never regret it later, if you respect their opinions now.

But the last reason is the biggest, and though you forget the others try to remember this one. "Be not wise in your own conceits," because *pride and self-conceit keep us away from Christ.* It was pride that kept the Jews away from Christ. They thought they knew so much better than He did, and they would not listen to His message. And it is pride that may keep us away from Him too. He does not ask that those who come to Him should be good or wise, but if we wish to be His disciples we must lay ourselves like little children at His feet, knowing nothing, trusting not in our own goodness or power. Then He will lift us up and give us the knowledge that is true wisdom, the love that is true strength.

WHAT IS THE TIME?

Knowing the time.—Rom. xiii. 11 (AV).

I MET a small boy the other day who wanted—not to *know* the time, but to be *asked* the time! What do you think was the reason? Well, he had just had a birthday and his grandmother had presented him with a watch, not one of those imitation toy ones that never move out of the bit unless you turn a screw, but a real live one that ticked and had hands that moved round of their own accord. And so my small friend wanted to be asked the time. He wanted to use his watch and to show it off, just as you might want to play cricket if you had received a new bat, or as you might long for rain if you had got a new waterproof.

Now, if I were to ask you the question I had to ask that boy I wonder if you could answer correctly. Do you know the time? Thousands of years ago men saw that it was a very important thing to know, and so they invented clocks. But, of course, the first clocks were not at all like ours. In fact *you* might not call them clocks at all. Would you like to know how they were made? A vessel having a tiny hole or set of holes was filled with water. From this vessel the water dripped into another vessel in which certain distances

were marked off. People were able roughly to tell the hour from the time the water, or some object floating in it, took to reach these marks.

Later, other means were invented to mark the passage of time. Sun-dials were made, and sand-glasses very much like the egg-boiler you may see on the kitchen mantelpiece, only on a much larger scale; and King Alfred the Great marked his time by burning candles. Each candle was about twelve inches long and burned four hours. But, besides that, every candle was marked with notches at regular intervals so that shorter periods of time could be noted. The natives of Korea still measure time in a similar way, by burning knotted ropes.

It was not till the thirteenth century that clocks something like those we know came to be used in Europe. So far as we know, the first clock that was brought to England was put up in the tower of Westminster Hall in the year 1288. But it was hundreds of years later before clocks and watches came to be at all cheap or plentiful.

Nowadays we have a great number of clocks and watches, and yet there are many people who don't know the time. I wonder if you know it. I don't mean, can you read the clock face and tell exactly what hour and minute it is—I expect most of you can do that—but do you *know* the time? Because, you see, there is a big difference between *telling* the time and *knowing* the time. There is a right time and a

wrong time to do most things, and unless you know which is which you don't really know the time, though you may be able to read all the queer clocks in the world.

1. Some boys and girls don't know the time *to get up.* The time to rise in the morning is when you are knocked, not ten minutes or half-an-hour after. Of course it's not nice to jump out of bed, especially on a cold winter morning. But the longer we stay there the more difficult it becomes to leave it. And the half-hour we lose then we can never quite make up. Do you know the sad history of Little Mary Geraldine?

Little Mary Geraldine
(The clock was striking eight)
Had lost a very precious thing:
It made her breakfast late;
It made her hurry off to school
Without a piece of cake;
It made her give dear little Ned
A really truly shake
Because the wind blew off his hat;
It made her cheeks feel hot,
And tears kept coming as she ran,
And quite a lumpy spot
Came in her throat. 'Twas not her hat,
'Twas not her furry muff,
'Twas not her bag that she had lost;
'Twas really not enough,
She thought, to trouble her so much—
She lost it in her bed;
'Twas just one little short half-hour
Made all that fuss, she said.[1]

[1] Elizabeth L. Gould.

Don't lose your half-hours. A little determination will soon save them.

2. Some boys and girls don't know the time *to stop nonsense.* Now please don't run away with the idea that I want you to be gloomy and to pull long faces. I believe the glad people in the world do ten times as much good as the sad ones, and the jollier you are the more likely you are to cheer and help others. But, for all that, there is a time when fun is out of place. It is time to stop fun when we ought to be working hard. It is time to stop it when our fun is hurting somebody else. A little teasing is good for everyone, but there is a kind of teasing (you all know it) which is a form of cruelty. Never let fun go that length; never, if you can help it, let anyone be the worse for your fun. For remember that when we hurt other people in this way we are hurting ourselves too. We are making ourselves cruel, and coarse, and hard.

3. Some boys and girls don't know the time *to learn.* They trifle away the precious hours of boyhood and girlhood when their minds are easily impressed and knowledge is easily gained. So they grow up ignorant and lose their chances of success in the world.

If the right time to learn lessons were thirty or forty, you would be kept at home now and sent to school then. But by the time you are thirty or forty you will have to be doing other things—making a home; or conducting a business; healing the sick; building houses, or bridges, or ships; tilling the ground; sailing

the seas; working in the colonies. Use your school-time well and you will be ready for the other things.

4. Some people don't know the best time *to begin following Jesus.* They let all the beautiful fresh days of youth go past, and then perhaps, when they are old and sad, and their heart is soiled and bruised, they bring the remnants of their life to Him. And although Jesus never sends anybody away, although He can take even the tattered remnants of a life and make them into something pure and beautiful, yet these people have forever lost the joy and the privilege of serving Him with their youth and their strength. Jesus has done so much for us. He has given us everything He possessed. Do you think it is quite fair to spend the best of our life on our own ends and offer Him the fragments? You have the splendid chance of offering Him all your life to be spent in pure and noble service. Will you offer Him that gift?

THE VICTOR'S CROWN.

Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.—1 Cor. ix. 25.

In the days of St. Paul there were held every second year near Corinth the famous Isthmian games. These games were national gatherings, and from near and far people came to view them. They were held in an amphitheatre, a huge building like a circus, but open to the sky. In the middle of this building was the arena—a sanded space where the contests took place—and all round were tiers of seats for the onlookers.

The competitors for these games had to fulfil certain conditions. For ten months previous to the date of the contest they had to undergo a very severe training. They had many hardships to endure and much fatigue, and they were allowed only certain kinds of food. For the last thirty days they were obliged to attend the exercises at the gymnasium. No competitor could enter the lists unless he could prove that he had fulfilled all these conditions.

There were many different forms of contest—running, wrestling, boxing, etc., but in each contest there could be only one victor. The victor was

crowned with a garland of pine leaves, and this prize was very much coveted. Now perhaps you think that was a very poor reward, and yet these men were willing to undergo all the months of weary training just to have the chance of winning it. For the victor was greatly honoured. Poets wrote songs about him. When he returned home the wall of his town was thrown down that he might walk over it as though he were a conqueror. Often his fellow-citizens erected a statue in his honour.

Now St. Paul is writing to the people of Corinth and he tells them that the Christian life is very much like one of these contests. We have to be just as much in earnest as these competitors. But we have entered a much grander contest, and we are striving for a much better reward. They do it to receive a "corruptible crown," a garland of leaves that will soon wither away; but we are promised an incorruptible crown, a crown that will last for ever and ever.

And first St. Paul tells us that the Christian life is like a *race*. If we want to win the victor's crown, we must run straight ahead and never take our eyes off the goal. We must allow nothing to distract us from our aim.

Do you know the Arab story of the magic treasure which lay at the top of a mountain? All you had to do to win the treasure was to climb the mountain. That seemed simple enough, but there was one condition—whatever happened or whatever you heard, you

must on no account look back. Whoever looked back was immediately turned into stone.

Well, a great many people tried to reach the treasure, but somehow or other they always failed, and the mountain was beginning to get quite decorated with stone statues.

At last a family of two boys and a girl resolved that they would try their luck. The eldest brother set out first and he was quite determined that nothing should make him look round. To begin with he got along splendidly. He heard voices calling to him but he took no notice. One voice told him to turn back instantly or he would be killed. Another cried out that he was mad to think of reaching the treasure. Still he held on his way. Then he heard someone sneering at him and calling him a coward. That was more than he could stand. He turned round in a rage to find the owner of the voice, and immediately he became a stone.

The second brother fared a little better. He managed to get about half-way up the mountain. Then he heard a sweet voice inviting him to rest. He turned round without thinking, and he, too, was changed to stone.

Last of all the sister set out to climb the mountain, but first she closed her ears to all sounds. In vain the voices praised, threatened, insulted, or invited. She held on her way unmoved. So at last she reached the top of the mountain and won the treasure.

Now the race we are running is very much like

that pathway up the side of the mountain. Many voices try to distract us. Some may sneer at us, others flatter us, others threaten us. But if we want to win the victor's crown we must close our ears to all these voices and hold straight on to our goal.

And then Paul tells us that the Christian life is like a *boxing-match.* He says there are many temptations, but if we want to overcome them we must hit them hard and straight, not just beat the air in a half-hearted sort of way.

Once upon a time a man came to a wise old king and asked him for a charm to overcome temptation. He complained that he had tried to do right, but again and again he had yielded to temptation.

The king ordered a bowl to be filled with oil to the very brim. The bowl was filled till it could not hold another drop. Then he sent for two soldiers. Next he commanded the man to take up the bowl of oil and carry it through the streets of the town without spilling a single drop. But the man objected. "I would willingly do it, your majesty," he said, "but it would be impossible." "That has still to be proved," replied the king, "for these two soldiers will march behind you with drawn swords, and if you spill a single drop they have orders to cut off your head immediately."

So the man took up the bowl of oil, and in fear and trembling set out on his journey through the city. There were many interesting things going on around

him, but he had no eyes to see them. Many of his friends greeted him and some of them laughed at him, but he had no ears to listen to them. All his attention was fixed on preventing the oil from overflowing the bowl. At length he reached the palace again without having spilt a single drop.

When he returned, the king inquired how he had fared, what he had seen, and to how many people he had spoken. But the man replied that he had seen and heard nothing. He was thinking only of how to keep the oil from overflowing. "Then," said the king, "you have discovered the charm for overcoming temptation. Fix your mind as firmly on overcoming as you fixed your eyes on the bowl, and you will win."

Yes, boys and girls, that is the secret; but it is only half of it. Even St. Paul was in despair sometimes and complained that the good that he would he did not, and the evil which he would not, that he did. And then he remembered that only in one way could he be sure of victory—through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If you would wear the victor's crown you must fight hard, but not alone. Keep firm hold of Jesus and He will lead you to victory at last.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are :—Ex. xxxix. 30, 2 Kings xi. 12, Jn. xix. 2.

Grant, who commanded the Northern army in the American Civil War and afterwards became President of the United States. One day someone asked him his opinion of a certain officer in his army. General Grant spoke of this man in the warmest terms, and the questioner exclaimed, "But do you know that he said this and that of you?" "Sir," was the reply, "you asked me my opinion of him, not his of me."

To have a heart that cherishes no malice, a mind that is above resenting slights—that is better than all knowledge. It is the most difficult lesson of all. Some of us who are grown-up have not learned it yet, and we have been trying to learn it all our lives.

3. Knowledge is of little use unless you can love the person who is disagreeable or unattractive. It is easy enough to love some people—those who are pleasant, or beautiful, or kind. But there are others who have come into the world with a twist in their faces or their characters. They are plain, or stupid, or shy, or awkward in their manner; perhaps they are even disagreeable and unkind. Possibly you know a few at your own school—boys or girls whom nobody wants to love and nobody seems to want to make friends with.

Now, there is an Eastern proverb which says, "Through love, bits of copper are made gold." And there is no saying what we may do to these unattractive people just by loving them. Perhaps it is because they have never been loved enough that they are

unattractive; and by loving them we may turn copper into gold.

Do you want to make the world better and happier? Then love. We can never love too much, we may often love too little. Love people who are unattractive. That is what Jesus does. He loves you and me. Jesus loves and He is going to love the world good.

We can't all be rich, we can't all be clever, we can't all be beautiful, but we can all love. Don't you think that is a grand lesson? Don't you think it is a lesson worth learning?

THE BIGGEST LESSON.

If I . . . know all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing.—1 Cor. xiii. 2.

If I were to ask each of you this morning, "Why do you go to school?" I wonder what answers I should receive. I expect most of you would at once reply, "To learn lessons." Some of you might answer, "To learn as little as I possibly can!" and a few might say, "To play."

But now shall I tell you the real reason why you go to school? It is that you may be made into useful and helpful men and women. If you have not learned that, your knowledge will just be a sort of empty ornament. And what is the key to being the best and most useful men and women? It is one small word of four letters—Love.

St. Paul once wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth about this very subject. They had been quarrelling among themselves as to who had the greatest gift and who should have the place of honour. Those who prophesied said they were the cleverest; those who did miracles thought they were of more importance; those who were eloquent, or learned, or knew many languages, claimed to be the wisest;

and so on. Their quarrels had led to a great deal of ill-feeling and envy and boasting and pride. And whilst they were squabbling they forgot that the greatest gift the Christian can have is love. That was the biggest lesson the Corinthians had to learn and they scarcely knew the A B C of it. And Paul told them that although the other gifts were all good, if they had them all and lacked love they were nothing.

So though you are top of your class in history and geography and arithmetic and science, though you know all the languages, dead or alive, and have not love, you are nothing. If you carry off the first prize in everything and are unkind or unjust towards your companions, you count for nothing and less than nothing.

1. Knowledge is no good unless you can learn to love the boy or girl who won the prize you worked for and missed. To walk up to that boy or girl and shake hands and congratulate them and to do it with a smile, while you choke back the feelings of envy that hurt, that is true pluck and true Christianity. And that is one of the hardest lessons we have to learn, not only at school, but all through life. If your years at school have taught you that, they have not been spent in vain.

2. Knowledge is not much good unless you can learn to love the person who has done you harm. There is a story told of a great American, General

TAMING THE WILD BEASTS.

I fought with beasts at Ephesus.—1 Cor. xv. 32.

WHAT did St. Paul mean when he talked about fighting with beasts at Ephesus? If you turn to the nineteenth chapter of Acts you will see what kind of beasts he had to fight with. There you will find an account of the doings of men whose angry passions had turned them for the time being into wild beasts.

The Ephesians were worshippers of the goddess Diana, and a great trade was done in the city in shrines and relics. When St. Paul came to Ephesus and converted great numbers to Christianity many of these traders lost their custom. One of them called his fellow-craftsmen together and pointed out to them what was happening, and they, in their turn, stirred up the mob so that the whole city was in an uproar. Some people shouted one thing and some another, and many did not know what they were shouting about. They seized two of Paul's companions and rushed them to the theatre and then for two whole hours on end they shouted themselves hoarse crying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." It was only with great difficulty that the town clerk at last succeeded in pacifying them.

Now many people think it was to this riot that Paul was referring when he spoke of fighting with beasts at Ephesus—and an angry mob is much more like a menagerie of wild beasts than a company of human beings; but there are beasts that Paul must have been fighting not only at Ephesus, but everywhere he went; and there are beasts, too, that we have to keep fighting all the time if we would not let them get the better of us. These beasts are within us, not without, and many of them are very fierce and difficult to conquer. Shall I tell you some of their names?

Some of us have to fight with a *tiger*. These are the people who have got very bad tempers. Often you can hear the tigers growling and many times you can see their claws. These tigers wound and hurt other people terribly sometimes, but even more than they hurt other people they hurt their owners. For those who are allowing their tempers to get the better of them are doing themselves a terrible injury.

And what are we to do with these tigers of ours? The best thing is to chain them up. They are really valuable beasts if kept under control and used in the right way, but we must let them loose only when there is anything wrong or mean to destroy.

And then some of us have got to fight *bears*. These are the rough, surly sort of people who are always treading on other people's toes. Often they don't mean to do so. It is just their clumsy way, but un-

fortunately that doesn't make any difference to the pain in the other people's toes!

And what are we to do if we have bears to conquer? Well, we have got to work very hard to train them to be less clumsy and disagreeable. People talk a great deal about "rough diamonds" and they sometimes speak as if it were a virtue to be a "rough diamond." Well, of course, it is much better to be a rough diamond than a smooth bit of glass; it is much better to be rough and sincere than smooth and false; but there is no virtue in the roughness itself, and a beautiful cut diamond is a far finer thing than a rough one.

And then there are people who have to conquer a *mule*. Perhaps you think a mule can be much more easily kept in order than a tiger or a bear. I wonder if you ever tried to get a mule to do something it didn't want to do! The people who have a mule to conquer are the people who are stubborn, and they have a very hard task indeed.

But I want to say this for the comfort of the mulish people. That obstinacy of yours is just a good thing gone wrong. You know that many flowers, if they are allowed to grow as they like, turn into weeds again. I heard of a gentleman who was very fond of his garden and had a special fancy for cultivating pansies. But a great sorrow came to this man and after that he neglected his garden and let the flowers grow wild. In a few years his fine pansies had changed back into common field violets. Now, obstinacy is just a flower

that has turned into a weed. It is a strong will turned into self-will. And a strong will is a very good thing if it is used in the right way. It can overcome difficulties, and resist temptation, and endure hardships. Nearly all the great statesmen and great soldiers and sailors have had strong wills. Remember that weeds can be cultivated and turned into flowers as well as flowers neglected and turned into weeds. And so if you have to fight with a mule in your heart remember that good things gone wrong can be changed again into bad things come right, and that that obstinacy of yours may be turned into a wise and firm determination.

But there are others of us who have to fight with a *pig*. I don't mean to say that we are untidy or uncleanly in our habits. Whenever I think of a pig I think first of someone who is very greedy. The people who are always thinking of their next meal, who always choose the rosiest apple and the nicest cake, the people who live to eat instead of eating to live, have a good deal of the pig in them. And I think the people who like nasty stories and jokes have a good deal more of the pig in them.

Now, I hope there aren't many here who have to fight with a pig, but if there are any, then the only thing they can do with that pig is to kill it outright. We may turn our tigers and our mules to good account and we may train our bears, but if we leave our pigs alive the danger is they will drag us down in the mire.

Once more, some of us have to fight with a *serpent*,

and these are the people who are tempted to be deceitful. Well, I hope there aren't any of them here, for if they don't deal very sharply with that serpent it will poison their whole nature. It is so cunning that it may get the better of them however hard they try, and the one thing to do with it is to kill it outright like the pig.

But how are we to tame and conquer all these beasts? Well, there are two things we must do. First, we must catch them young. People who undertake the training of wild animals always begin to tame them when they are small. If they waited till they were grown-up the task would be almost or altogether hopeless. And we, too, must begin to tame our wild beasts when they are young or they may get too strong for us.

And the other thing we must do is to ask Jesus very earnestly to help us. We can never be quite sure that we shall get the better of them unless He is on our side. But if we ask Him to help us, and then strive very hard to do our part, we are sure to conquer, and we shall come out all the nobler and finer in the end of the day for having fought with the beasts.

LIVING LETTERS.

Ye are an epistle of Christ.—2 Cor. iii. 3.

WHAT is an epistle? An epistle is just a letter. St. Paul is writing to the Christians at Corinth and he tells them that they are letters of Christ.

Now that seems a strange thing to say, does it not? I wonder what St. Paul means by it. What does it mean to be a letter of Christ? And how does Christ write His letters?

Well, when Jesus was on earth we never hear of His writing any letters. Only once do we hear of His writing at all, and that time He wrote on the ground. St. Paul wrote a number of letters. He wrote epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians and others; he wrote two long letters to his friend Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon. But so far as we know Jesus never wrote any letters of that kind. And yet He was always writing letters. Every day He was writing them, and some of the letters He wrote carried His message into far distant lands. And the wonderful bit of it was that Jesus did not stop writing His letters when He left the world. He went on writing them, and He is still writing them every day.

How does Jesus write His letters? He writes them

on the hearts of men and women, and boys and girls. When He wants to let the world know something about Himself He takes a boy or a girl and He writes a little bit of Himself on them and then He sends them out to the world; and if they are faithful letters, if they are brave, and true, and honourable, and kind, then the world knows a little more of what Christ is like.

Now, Jesus is still in need of letters. He can never have too many of them. And He wants to write on you and on me. Don't you think it is a tremendous honour to be a letter of Christ? If Jesus came into this church to-day and chose you to run a message for Him, wouldn't you feel proud and glad? Well, Jesus *is* here though we cannot see Him, and He wants to send a special message by you to the world. I don't know what that message is, but I know that nobody can carry it quite so well as you.

There are three things I should like you to remember.

The first is, that if we are not allowing Jesus to write on us we are letting other things write on us. We can't stay just blank sheets of paper. Satan is always busy dipping his pen in the ink. If we are not allowing Jesus to write on us then we are letting sin, or care, or self, or the love of pleasure, or the love of money write their message. And their writing is not beautiful. Jesus' writing is always beautiful, but the writing of these things is black and ugly.

And the second thing I want you to remember is that Jesus can't write on us unless we let Him. He has many beautiful things to tell us and to tell *by* us, but we must be willing to be His letters. We must give Him permission to write on us.

Lastly, if we become Jesus' letters we must take care not to allow the writing to get blurred.

In the libraries of Europe are wonderful old parchments called palimpsests. These parchments have had a strange history. Originally they were covered with writing of great value—portions of the Old and New Testaments or fragments from the works of famous Latin and Greek authors. But in the Middle Ages parchment became very scarce, and the monks, not realising the value of these old manuscripts, took the parchments and washed or scraped off the writing. Then they covered them with their own writings—legends and treatises of little value. And these wonderful manuscripts would have remained lost to the world if modern scholars had not guessed what was hidden underneath the writing of the monks. Perhaps they saw a word here and there that had been imperfectly erased, and they treated the parchments with acids so that the original writing was brought out again—faintly perhaps, but still so that it might be read after a fashion.

There are some of Christ's letters that are just like these palimpsests. They have covered up His writing with their own foolish scrawls and mistakes. They

have become so cross, or so unkind, or so selfish, that other people find it very difficult to recognize in them the hand-writing of Jesus. But we need never be like that. The best way to prevent it is to take our letters to Jesus every day and ask Him to renew the writing. Then the characters will always be fresh and clear, and wherever we go the world will be able to read the beautiful message of Christ.

A FALSE AND A TRUE MEASURE.

But they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.—2 Cor. x. 12.

I WONDER how many of you get measured regularly by your father or mother. Are you ever made to take off your shoes and stand very straight and erect with your back against a door, while a book is laid on the top of your head and a little pencil mark is put on the door underneath the book?

I once knew a family of four children who used to be measured like that every three months or so. The marks were made on the inside of a big cupboard door in the schoolroom, and the name of each child and the date was written alongside like this:—Mabel, 1st March 1911; Margaret, 4th June 1912; Norah, 2nd Sept. 1912; Jim, 1st Dec. 1913.

Each time they were measured the younger ones used to count back to see how much bigger or smaller they were than the older ones at the same age. Mabel, the eldest, was very tall, and nobody could ever beat her, and poor little Jim who was the youngest was also the smallest for his age. He never seemed to

manage to be as big as any of his sisters had been at his age, but I can remember his glee when one day he came and told me that at last he was *really and truly* a quarter of an inch taller than Margaret had been when she was seven.

These children were "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves," and I think that kind of measuring is very interesting and harmless. But there is another kind of measuring that is not quite so good, and it was this measuring and comparing that St. Paul meant when he wrote this letter to the Corinthian Church. There was a little set in the Church at Corinth who thought their way of doing things was the only right way. They measured themselves by themselves, instead of measuring themselves by something much higher and nobler, and so they never grew any better or wiser. They had a false measure, and it led them to become proud, and self-satisfied, and overbearing.

Now we are all in danger of making the same mistake, and so I want to speak to you about the False Measure and after we have finished talking about that, I want to tell you about the True Measure.

The false way of measuring is to measure ourselves by ourselves. And the reason why it is false is that none of us is perfect.

Once upon a time there was a gentleman who owned a beautiful Chinese plaque. It was ornamented with all sorts of queer dragons and he valued it very highly.

But one day the plaque fell from the wall where it was hanging and it broke in two right down the middle. Some time after, this gentleman had a chance of sending the plaque out to China and of ordering six more. In order that they might be exactly like the broken one, he packed the two bits of it very carefully and sent them out as a copy. A few months later a box arrived from China containing the plaques. Very eagerly he unpacked it, and what do you think he saw? Six plaques exactly the same size as his own one; ornamenting them, exactly the same dragons in exactly the same colours; and down the centre of each plaque —a crack exactly like the break down the middle of the original!

That makes you laugh, but do you know that you are just as silly when you copy the mistakes in other people's characters? So don't do wrong things just because others are doing them, don't measure your conscience by theirs.

Just a few words about the True Measure. If we are not to compare ourselves with ourselves, with whom are we to compare ourselves? Well, God has given us a Perfect Example, a True Measure to guide us. He sent Jesus down to earth to show us how we should live, and if we measure ourselves by Him we can never make any mistake.

There is an ancient legend which tells of a wonderful statue of Christ. This statue seemed to be the height of an ordinary man, but whoever measured

himself with it always found it just a little taller than himself.

Jesus is above us all, because He wants to lift us up. If we keep looking up to Him and trying to imitate Him we shall grow better and braver and kinder, but if we never try to rise above the earthly standard, the chances are that we shall become less noble and brave and good as the years go on.

Once a lady missionary took a little Hindoo orphan boy to live with her. She taught him about Jesus, and one night when he was six years old she told him he might pray a prayer of his own. What do you think he said? "Dear Jesus, make me like what you were when you were six years old." Jesus came to earth to show not only men and women but also boys and girls how they should live. We are apt to think of Him as a grown man doing kind deeds and speaking wise words, but He was once just as old as you are. And I think none of the boys and girls could pray a better prayer than just this, "Dear Jesus, make me like what you were when you were my age."

ENEMY OR FRIEND?

So then am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?—Gal. iv. 16.

THIS is a question St. Paul asked some of his friends in Galatia. He had been telling them some plain truths about themselves and they didn't like it. Paul cared for them too much to see them going astray without trying to stop them. But the Galatians "took the huff." They said that Paul had become their enemy, that he no longer loved them since he said such unkind things about them. They were just like so many petted babies.

I think a great many of us resemble these foolish Galatians. We don't care to be told our faults and we get angry with the people who tell us them. So long as people say nice things about us we are quite sweet, but when they begin to find fault with us we take offence. We are like the cardinal who was one day making confession to a monk, as they do in the Roman Catholic Church. He began by saying that he was the "chief of sinners," and the monk agreed with him. Then he went on to say that he had been guilty of every kind of sin. The monk replied that this also was true. Once more he said that he had indulged in pride,

ambition, malice, and revenge. Again the monk replied that undoubtedly he had done so. At this the cardinal lost his temper. "Why, you fool," he said, "you don't suppose I mean all this to the very letter!"

Are we not often very like that cardinal? We don't mind confessing our faults, but it is a different matter when other people agree with us or when *they* begin to point out those faults.

Of course it is very silly to behave in this way. It is like smashing a mirror because it shows us we are plain-looking. The fault is not in the mirror, it is in ourselves. Sometimes our parents point out our faults, sometimes our teachers, sometimes our friends. They don't like doing it, but they do it because they see we are spoiling ourselves. They want us to make the very best of ourselves and we should be grateful to them, instead of resenting their plain-speaking.

1. So you will notice first that those who tell us faithful but unpleasant truths are our friends, not our enemies. They wish us well and are too concerned for our good to flatter us. The people who are really our enemies are those who say pleasant untrue things.

Do you remember the old, old fable of the fox and the crow? The crow had stolen a bit of cheese out of a cottage window and he flew up to a tree to enjoy it, when along came Mr. Fox. Now, Mr. Fox saw that bit of cheese and he particularly wanted it, so he immediately set about trying to get it. He sat down

under the tree and began by telling the crow that her feathers were most beautifully white and that her figure was more graceful than that of any other bird. Then he went on to say that he was sure such a handsome bird must have a lovely voice and that he would like to hear her sing. The silly crow was so flattered that she opened her beak to sing. And out fell the cheese, which was immediately gobbled up by Mr. Fox.

The people we should really avoid are those who, like the fox in the story, tell us that the black things in our character are white and the ugly things are beautiful. Often they flatter us to serve their own ends. They do us no good and they generally wish us no good.

2. There is one very good friend who tells us plain and unwelcome truths about ourselves. Often we refuse to listen to this friend, but when we act in that way we are very foolish. For the voice of this friend grows fainter and fainter each time we refuse to listen to it, and some day, if we go on refusing, it will cease to speak altogether. Then we shall be in a very sad case indeed. I wonder if you have guessed the name of this friend? Some people call it Conscience, but others call it the voice of God.

There is an eastern legend about a wonderful ring that was presented to a prince by a great magician. This ring possessed a curious quality. If the prince acted rightly the ring was like other rings, but if he

did a wrong thing or cherished a bad thought, it contracted and hurt his finger.

Conscience is just like that magic ring. If we do wrong it hurts, but its hurts are the hurts of a friend, and when it stops hurting it means that the best part of us is dead.

God has given us each a conscience to be our helper and our guide. Don't treat yours as an enemy, cherish it as your best friend. For if you listen to its voice and obey its counsels it will lead you at last home to God.

YOUNG FARMERS.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.—Gal. vi. 7.

To the boys and girls of long ago, these seemed terrible words. The reason was that the sermons preached upon them were nearly always about a harvest of sins, and the punishment of the sower. Little was said of the possibility of raising good crops and the reward that comes to those who do.

Here "crops" mean what men and women achieve in the world—poor crops fit only to be burned, or a harvest that will make the whole world richer. So, in a sense, you boys and girls are all farmers; to each of you has been given a piece of land on which to raise crops.

But you begin to wonder how such crops are raised. An old schoolmaster used to teach his boys to repeat this little sentence. "Sow a thought and you reap an act; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a destiny." So you see that our crops are just our habits. If you think a good thought every morning before you go to school, a good action will be sure to follow. If you do that day after day, the good actions become a habit. That is the secret of the successful farming that Paul speaks about.

We all know that farmers have to work hard if they are to have good harvests. Yesterday it was my privilege to walk round a few of the fields of a man who raised wonderfully fine crops on his farm. His name was General Gordon: he has been called the St. Paul of the nineteenth century. One field had a magnificent crop of something every one of you boys and girls should sow. That is *earnestness.* Gordon was just a lad when he sowed it. He had already got the decoration of the Legion of Honour, so he must have been a brave soldier. The crop on another field quite near made a splendid show. I should say it was one of the best crops on the whole farm. It was *duty.* If General Gordon saw that a certain course was right, he never hesitated to take it, and he did not mind one bit what people said or thought about him.

One of the most beautiful fields on General Gordon's farm was *sympathy.* Very often when soldiers have leisure they spend it in visiting or going to parties. General Gordon's haunts were the infirmary and the workhouse. He would carry a bunch of grapes to the bedside of a poor working man, and place them one by one in his parched mouth. Here is one of his own notes: "I took a poor old bag-of-bones into my camp a month ago, and have been feeding her up, but yesterday she was quietly taken off and knows all things. She had her tobacco up to the last, and died quite quietly. What a change from her misery! I suppose she filled her place as well as Queen Elizabeth."

One other field, I know that many of you are

already anxious to grow it. General Gordon constantly cultivated the *presence of Jesus Christ.* In whatever danger he was he never felt afraid. He once wrote, "No comfort is equal to that which he has who has God for his stay." When at last he was shut up in the besieged city from which he was never rescued and never escaped, we get the following message, "I am obliged to trust God alone, as if He was not enough!"

"God rules all," he said, in his last farewell to his sister, "and as God will rule to His glory, and our welfare, His will be done."

Wouldn't you all like to be farmers after the pattern of that brave man? You are only boys and girls, but because that is so I have spoken to you about looking after your farm. For, like the country farmers, you must sow your seed in early spring—the spring-time of life.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.—Gal. vi. 17 (AV).

I WONDER if you know the legend of how our dear old friend Mr. Robin got his red breast? To a great many people a robin suggests the autumn, when he comes to cheer us up with his quaint little piping song. And to a great many others he suggests the winter-time, when he comes to pick the crumbs off our window-sills. But when I see a robin with his bright scarlet breast I think of Eastertide. Shall I tell you why?

It is said that when Jesus was climbing the steep ascent of Calvary with the crown of thorns on His head He fell down under the weight of His cross. A little robin sat warbling on a tree near by, and when it saw the cruel crown piercing the Saviour's brow it flew to His side and tried to pluck even one thorn away. But the sharp spike pierced its dear little breast and stained it crimson, and from that day till this the robin has worn on its breast the marks of the wound that it bore for Jesus' sake.

Of course that is just a legend, but although it is only a story it carries a very beautiful and true meaning. St. Paul once wrote a letter to some friends in a

province called Galatia, and he told them that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

I wonder what Paul meant when he said that? Well, I fancy he was thinking of all the sufferings that he had endured for Jesus' sake and that marked him as Jesus' own. Like the robin, he had shared in Christ's sufferings and he bore the marks of them, and these marks were the signs that he belonged to Jesus. They were Christ's special badge. In one of his letters to the Corinthians he gives us a long list of these sufferings. He had been beaten many times; he had been stoned, he had been in perils by land and sea; he had been in danger from his own countrymen, from the heathen, from robbers; often he had been hungry, and cold, and weary, and sick.

Some of you may have seen a flock of sheep with blue or red marks on their backs to show their ownership, and you know that cattle very often have marks burned on their horns for the same purpose. Now in Paul's day the masters used to brand a special mark on runaway slaves, so that they might be known again. And sometimes men burned on their bodies the name or special sign of the heathen god to whom they had devoted themselves.

Paul says that the marks that his sufferings had left on his body were the special signs whereby he might be recognized as a disciple of Christ. They were the marks by which Jesus knew him, and they were the marks by which other people knew he belonged to Jesus.

Now, if we are going to be true followers of Christ, we also shall have to bear the marks that hurt. We may not have to suffer the things Paul had to suffer, but if we want to be faithful disciples and of real use to our Master, our discipleship is sure to cost us a great deal of trouble and perhaps some pain. But you know that that is true of anything that is worth doing. If you want to be a good scholar you must work very hard and take a great deal of pains to learn. If you want to be a good musician you must go through a lot of disagreeable drudgery. If you want to be a good cricketer you must practise very hard and play many a losing game. And if we want to be good followers of Christ we shall have to take a great deal of trouble and perhaps suffer many rebuffs and discouragements.

What are a few of the marks we must bear for Jesus?

Well, first, there is the mark of *self-discipline*. And that is a mark that often hurts very much. Some of us will have to try to get the better of our temper; we shall have to check the angry word that rises, and swallow the bitter retort though it almost chokes us. Some of us will have to conquer selfishness and laziness, and *make* our feet run on other people's errands though they almost refuse to go. And some of us will have to learn to give up to others. And some of us will have to struggle with envy and spite and jealousy.

Another mark of Jesus we may have to bear is *reproach*. Sometimes we may have to stand up for the

right and take the consequences, no matter how much it hurts or how much other people laugh at us. Now please don't run away with the idea that I want you all to be prigs. There is no more detestable person than the boy or girl who is always putting other people right; but there comes a time to most of us when we have to play either the man or the coward, and when that time comes I hope you will stand up for your Master and bear His marks however much they hurt.

Yet another mark we have to bear for Jesus' sake is the mark of *other people's burdens*. He came down to earth to bear burdens—the burdens of sin and sorrow and death; and when you are helping to bear burdens you are doing the most Christ-like work. So every time that you make a sad person glad, or help a weary person to be a little less tired, every time you make the way a little easier for someone in a difficulty, you are bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Now perhaps you will think this is a very sad sermon, but I want you to remember two things. First, the marks of Jesus are a soldier's wounds, and they are not things that should make us sad; they are things that should make us proud and glad. Do you think a soldier is sad about the marks of the wounds he gets in battle? I fancy he is generally very proud of them. And I think that when our day of battle is over and our Captain calls us home we shall be very much ashamed to meet Him face to face if we don't bear some of His marks.

And, secondly, the marks of Jesus make us beautiful. The robin would scarcely be worth looking at were it not for his red breast, and we have no real beauty unless we bear Christ's marks. The marks of temper, and selfishness, and pride, and envy, and meanness spoil our faces and put ugly stains on our character, but the marks of Jesus adorn us with a beauty that will endure for ever.

WEATHERCOCKS.

Carried about with every wind.—Eph. iv. 14.

Our text to-day is one very high up in the world. It is something that is not mentioned in the Bible, yet five words from the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter of Ephesians describe it exactly. Here are the words—"Carried about with every wind." Have you guessed the text? Yes, it is a "weathercock," as we call it in Scotland, or a "vane," as they often name it in England.

Weathercocks, as you know, are not always in the form of a cock, although that is said to be the original pattern. Sometimes the piece of metal which shows the direction of the wind is shaped like a dragon or a fish or a pig; sometimes it is made like an arrow or a banner. On a ship the vane is usually a small streamer flown at the mast-head; and that is as it should be, for the old English word "vane" just meant a "flag" or "banner."

Now the sermon to-day is not only *about* weathercocks. It is also *to* weathercocks. I want to speak to all the little weathercocks who are sitting in the pews. You see, there are plenty of weathercocks inside the church, although there is only one outside on the top of the steeple.

A weathercock is a most excellent thing on the top of a steeple or a flag-staff, but it is not at all a nice thing inside a house. There it is a regular nuisance, always asking advice and never taking it, always saying "Shall I do this?" or "Shall I do that?" "What do *you* think?" etc., etc. Poor little weathercocks! They have no minds of their own. They are facing one way one minute and whirling round the opposite way the next. They are never settled themselves, and they are always unsettling other folk and making them uncomfortable. So I want to talk to the weathercocks this morning and I want to give them three pieces of advice.

1. The first is—*Don't be a weathercock in small things.* I wonder how many of you do something like this? You set out on Saturday to spend a shilling which someone gave you, say on Tuesday. You have had four days to decide what you will spend it on, but you can't quite make up your mind, so you come to the conclusion that you will settle in the shop. After looking at all the toys in the window, from left to right and from right to left again, you go into the shop and ask the girl behind the counter to show you something at a shilling. She brings out toy after toy, and the more she brings out the more difficult you find it to fix. The soldiers are fine!—But the motor-boat is A1!—And the model aeroplane is not to be sniffed at!—And so on it goes for the best part of an hour, till you are cross and tired and so is the poor shop-girl.

Once upon a time there was a little maid exactly like that. She was always chopping and changing and worrying herself and others. She became so undecided that an old lady whom she was visiting took her aside and said, "My dear, I'm sorry to see you can never make up your mind. Remember this. It is better to decide wrongly than never to decide at all." That sounded strange advice; but the old lady was right. The little girl tried the plan and it soon cured her of her indecision in trifles.

So the next time you can't make up your mind about a trifle say to yourself, "It's better to decide wrongly than never to decide at all." And choose then and there.

2. The second piece of advice is *Don't be a weathercock in big things.* For instance, don't be undecided as to what you are going to be when you grow up. When you were very tiny I expect most of you boys wanted to be an engine-driver, or a motor-man, or a blacksmith, or a plumber. In the half-dozen years from six to twelve you chose about a dozen and a half different professions. Well, that is very interesting; but when you come to the age of twelve or fourteen it is time to make up your mind in earnest and stick to it. The boy who is first in a warehouse, and then in a bank, and then thinks he'll study medicine, and after a year of that guesses rubber-planting is the job for him and goes off to the tropics—that boy *may* be a success; but the chances are two to one that he'll be a failure and a rolling stone all his days.

Boys and girls, think well before deciding on your future career, but, having decided, stick to your decision and make your life what it ought to be—a success.

3. The third piece of advice is—*Don't be a weathercock in the biggest thing of all.* What do I mean by that? Just this: don't be undecided about following Christ. Don't be half-persuaded that it would be a fine thing to be a Christian, and then hold back from becoming one. Don't say to yourself one day, "I'm going to follow Christ," and the next, "It'll be time enough to do that when I grow up." Don't tell yourself one minute, "Christ is the only Master worth serving," and the next be whispering to your heart, "What if serving Him means giving up all my fun and turning pious?"

If the last idea is the one that is keeping you from deciding, then all I can say is that you never made a greater mistake. Why! You only begin truly to enjoy yourself when you decide to follow Christ. Following Him does not mean pulling a long face and looking "holy." It means being jollier than before because you have a contented sort of feeling at your heart, and everything seems the same, only better. Don't tell me you need to give up anything except—except—the love of evil. Throw that away and put the love of Christ in its place. That's all.

Then why be a weathercock about what grown-up people call "the great decision"? The very name "great decision" sounds terrifying; but there is

nothing to be terrified about. It may be great, but it is easy as easy, and the younger you are the easier it is.

So, determine to-day, boys and girls, that about this at least you will be no weathercock. Make up your mind on the spot that you are going to enlist on the side of Christ, that you are going to scorn meanness, shun evil, and fight like a knight of old for God and the Right.

THE SONG OF THE HEART.

Singing and making melody with your heart.—Eph. v. 19.

THAT seems a queer thing to say, doesn't it?—"Singing and making melody with your heart." Perhaps you think St. Paul made a mistake and that he meant to say—"singing and making melody with your voice."

But St. Paul was right. The best song of all is the song of the heart. It is a song we should all sing, only we have forgotten the secret, and we find it again only when God touches our heart.

Now this seems rather difficult to understand, so I shall tell you a story that will make it easy for you.

In the little town of Freiburg there is an old cathedral which contains a wonderful organ. One day a stranger came to the cathedral and asked permission to play on the organ. But the old man who looked after the place refused to let him play. He told him that no stranger was allowed to touch the organ.

However, the visitor pleaded so long and so earnestly that at last the caretaker gave his consent. The stranger seated himself at the organ and soon the cathedral was filled with the most wonderful music. Never had the great organ produced such marvellous

melody. Tears ran down the old man's cheeks, and at last he laid his hand on the musician's shoulder. "What is your name?" he asked. And when the other replied, "Mendelssohn," the old caretaker could only exclaim, "And to think I refused to let you play on my organ!"

Boys and girls, our hearts are just like that organ. They are splendid instruments meant to produce beautiful music, but they await the touch of the Great Musician. Only when He touches them can they "make melody." Without that touch they are dumb or they only make discord.

Perhaps some of the older boys and girls know the name of Caedmon. Caedmon was a monk who lived in the seventh century and he was our earliest Anglo-Saxon poet. There is a story told of how Caedmon came by his gift of poetry. You may like to hear it.

In his youth Caedmon was the cowherd of the Abbey of Whitby, and it is said that he could neither sing nor make verses. In those days it was the custom to pass a harp round the company after the day's work was over so that each might contribute his share to the evening's entertainment. But whenever the harp appeared Caedmon used to slip away because he could neither sing nor play.

One evening, when the harp had been brought out as usual, the cowherd took refuge in the stable, and as he was tired with his day's work he presently fell asleep. In his sleep a stranger appeared to him and commanded him to sing. The monk replied that he could

not sing and that that was the reason why he had left the entertainment. But the stranger still commanded him to sing. "Sing," said he, "sing the beginning of created things." And presently Caedmon found himself singing verses in the praise of God, verses which he had never heard. From that day onward he became the poet of the monastery, and men said that the gift of God's grace in his heart had brought with it the gift of song.

Now, boys and girls, that all happened so long ago that it may be a bit of a legend. But still there is a great truth in it. Our hearts cannot sing the song God meant them to sing until we let Him touch them with His grace. He can make the most of us. He can make the best of our gifts and abilities. He can bring melody into our lives.

Remember the story of the old caretaker and how he almost missed hearing some of the most wonderful music in the world. We, too, may refuse the Great Musician, and the world will be a sad and tuneless place for us. But let us give Him permission to use our hearts as He will, then not only will they "make melody," but all our lives will be "one grand, sweet song."

MAKING THE BEST OF THINGS.

Do all things without murmurings.—Phil. ii. 14.

WHO would like to be a hero? You can all be that. How? By making the best of things, by doing all things "without murmurings," and that just means without grumbling. You think that is a silly sort of way of being a hero, that there is nothing grand about it, and that any "duffer" could do it? Well, have you tried it?

Next time you come down to breakfast and find the porridge singed, watch what you do. Next time you get that same old milk pudding to dinner, notice what you say. Next time you want to go out to play and the rain descends in torrents, see how you take it. Next time you are sent an errand at the most thrilling point in your storybook, observe how you behave.

I have known boys and girls whose life was one big grumble. They grumbled about the weather, they grumbled about their clothes, they grumbled about their food, they grumbled about their lessons, they grumbled even about their games. They never got such nice things as other people did, nobody was fair to them, everything was beastly and horrid.

Now, of course, there aren't any of that kind here,

but in case there are a few of the kind that do grumble now and again, I just want to say a word or two to them.

1. Make up your mind now that you are not always going to have things all your own way in life. Things will not always go exactly as you like, and it is well that they won't. You would probably become a very disagreeable person if they did. It is our disappointments and hardships—or rather the brave bearing of them—that make fine men and women of us. If things always went smoothly we should grow lazy, and selfish, and weak.

There is a story told of an Indian rajah who was always getting ill. At last he consulted his chief officer about it. "How is it," he asked, "that I am so often ill? I live in a palace; I have good food to eat and soft, warm clothing to wear; I never go out in the rain; and yet I am always ill."

The officer replied that too much care was worse than no care at all and that he would prove it. So he led the rajah out into the fields and there they met a shepherd tending his flocks. The shepherd was clad in coarse garments, his food was parched corn and water, he was accustomed to be out in all weathers, and his only shelter when he slept was a rude hut made of plaited palm leaves. And yet the man seemed to be in splendid health. The rajah asked him if he never suffered from cold or fever, and he replied, "No, I am accustomed to the hard life."

The officer begged the rajah to invite the shepherd

to the palace. The invitation was given and accepted. In the palace the shepherd was fed on fine food and clothed in soft garments. He was kept out of draughts and never allowed to go out in dew or rain or sunshine. At the end of some months, the marble floor of the courtyard was one day sprinkled with water to cleanse it, and the shepherd caught cold and died. The soft, easy life had made him weak and delicate.

Now, it is just like that with our little troubles and hardships. They are sent to make us strong. If things always went exactly as we wanted them to go, we should become poor, weak, selfish creatures. So next time you meet with something not quite to your liking, remember it is a blessing in disguise.

2. Another thing I want you to remember is that grumbling makes little troubles into big ones. It is curious how big our little misfortunes and disappointments become when we brood over them and complain about them. They are regular "Jack's Beanstalks" and grow apace.

Did you ever hear the fable of the two pitchers that went to the well? One of them looked very gloomy, and his companion asked him what was wrong. "Oh dear, oh dear," he sighed, "it seems to me it doesn't matter how often we are filled we always return empty." "Dear me," said the other, "that's a queer way of looking at it! I like to think that no matter how often we are emptied we are always brought back and filled full again."

And that story reminds me of another; it is about an Egyptian king who dreamt one night that all his teeth had fallen out. He was very much disturbed, and in the morning he sent for one of his soothsayers to interpret the dream. The man pulled a long face and told the monarch that he was afraid the vision meant that all his relatives would die before him and that he would be left alone to lament their loss. The king drove the soothsayer from his presence and ordered him to be whipped. Then he sent for another wise man and related the dream to him. This man wore a glad face. "Congratulate yourself, your majesty," said he, "this dream promises you great length of days. You will live longer than any of your relatives." The king was delighted and handsomely rewarded the interpreter.

These two men had said exactly the same thing, only they had said it in a different way. There are two sides to every question, a bright side and a dark side. There are two ways of meeting our troubles—making the best of them, which means making the least of them; or making the worst of them, which means making them a great deal bigger than they really are. Which do you think is the wiser way? Which way are you going to choose?

ON THE TRAIL.

I follow after.—Phil. iii. 12 (AV).

"FOLLOW my Leader" is a great game. But to make it a thorough success the leader must not be one who simply goes up one garden path and down another. He must go here, there, and everywhere. It is that that makes the game worth playing.

When anyone is following in the footsteps of a person, not in play but in earnest, we say they are "on the trail" of that person. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* we are told of four boys who went on a pilgrimage with their mother. Their father was on before, he had in fact reached the end of his journey, and was in the City of God. "The boys all take after their father," said their guide in speaking of them to a friend by the way, "and covet to tread in his steps; yea, if they do but see any place where the old pilgrim hath lain, or any print of his foot, it ministereth joy to their hearts, and they covet to lie or tread in the same."

Life is like the game of "Follow my Leader"; it is going on the trail of someone. Boys and girls must have a leader. Think how absurd it would be to try to follow our own lead. There would be no progress made: we should be just like the pussy cat that chases

its own tail. I have read of a sort of caterpillar, called the "Processional Caterpillar," which walks in long lines, each one following closely the next in front. A certain man once saw a number of these marching round the moulding of a stone vase in his garden. He got some more and filled up the gap between the tail and the head of the procession, and watched to see what the caterpillars would do. They actually went on following each his neighbour in front; they walked round that vase for a week and covered nearly a mile of distance!

You may, like the boys in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, follow on the trail of a good and brave man. Let me give you a little bit from a great man's speech. Abraham Lincoln, the famous American President, consecrated the battlefield of Gettysburg as a place for people to be buried in. On that occasion he said, "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men who struggled here have consecrated it far beyond our power to add or detract. It is for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we may take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. Let us here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain." These are words that might have been spoken to the boys and girls of to-day.

But the best of leaders is Jesus Christ. He asks much from those who follow Him. He leads by paths

that are sometimes very difficult and dangerous; but He is faithful; He will never betray those who honestly try to follow Him. In the end He will lead them to what is best of all—being with Him all the time.

James Gilmour, the famous missionary to the Mongolians, when near the end of his life, wrote to a friend, and in the letter he said: "When I was a young man in Glasgow, I thought I heard Jesus calling, 'Go ahead, James Gilmour'; and when I offered myself to the London Missionary Society I thought He said, 'Go to Mongolia, James Gilmour.' I made a mistake; He did not say, 'Go,' but 'Come after Me, follow Me.'"

And so He says to every boy and girl here.

THE NEW LEAF.

Forgetting the things which are behind.—Phil. iii. 13.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR, boys and girls! I had almost said "A Happy New Leaf," because the other day I read a poem about new leaves which has been rhyming in my head ever since. Would you like to hear it? It was written specially for boys and girls.

"Now what is that noise," said the glad New Year,
"What is that singular sound I hear,
As if all the paper in all the world
Was being shaken and twisted and twirled?"

"Oh! that," said the jolly old Earth, "is the noise
Made by the millions of girls and boys,
Turning over new leaves for you,
As everyone everywhere ought to do."

And so to-day I want to speak about new leaves—how to turn them, and how to keep them turned.

1. Now, the first thing to do with new leaves is to turn them. Of course you can do that at any time. You don't need to wait for the New Year to do it. But somehow the New Year is a specially good time for turning them. It is a new beginning. We have been given a clean sheet and we can make up our

mind to leave all the mistakes with the Old Year and not spoil the New one as we spoiled it.

And so the first thing is to turn your leaf. Try to leave something ugly behind you every year—some nasty temper, some little mean or selfish way. And put something good in its place. Then each year will grow more beautiful than the last.

2. But after you have turned your leaf, the next thing to do is to keep it turned. And that is a much more difficult thing than to turn it in the first place. It is fairly easy to make good resolutions, but it is not so easy to keep them. Some years ago the first item in *Punch's Almanac* was this—"January 1st. Good-resolution-breaking begins." Well, I hope that won't be true of your resolutions.

This is where a great many people get into difficulties, so I want to tell you three things to do with your leaf so that you may not make the mistakes these people have made.

(1) Be sure it is properly turned. You know if you turn the leaf of a book only half over the least gust of wind may blow it back again. And that is the way with a lot of people. They only half make up their minds to improve. They would like to do it, but they are not really in earnest about it. Now, if you really mean to turn your leaf you must do it thoroughly and determinedly. Half measures are no use.

(2) Don't turn back a corner of the new leaf to peep

at the old one. You are sure to spoil the new one as well as the old one if you do. This is a mistake a great many people make. When they fall into the old errors, instead of saying, "Well, never mind, I'll do better the next time," they say, "There's that horrid old fault again! You see it really isn't any use my trying to conquer it." And so they lose heart and give up.

Now never mind what you have done with the past. It is over and done with and you can't get it back. The main thing is to keep on trying, and then some day you will succeed.

Once there were three small boys who used to play at having "white" days. A "white" day was a day when they did nothing naughty, and seven "white" days made a "white" week. It was a splendid triumph when there was a whole "white" week.

One morning, the smallest boy did something naughty before breakfast and his brother exclaimed, "Oh, what a pity! You've spoilt your day."

For a moment the mite's face clouded over, and then he brightened up; "Nevvy mind," he said, "S'an't spoil *all* ze day."

If you have made a mistake at the beginning of the day, don't let it spoil *all* the day. If you have made an error at the top of your new leaf, don't let it spoil all the leaf. Make the rest of it all the better in consequence. Don't turn back to the old leaf and say, "Well, there's the identical fault I made before. I'd better just give up trying."

(3) Ask Jesus to help you to keep the leaf turned. You can never be quite sure of success if you don't. He can help us to turn our leaves. He can help us to keep them turned, and He can make each new leaf better than the old one.

WHAT IS MY THOUGHT LIKE?

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things.—Phil. iv. 8.

THERE is a game—I have no doubt you know it—called "What is my thought like?" One player thinks of something, and the others try to find out what it is. Have you ever played that game with yourself? How could you? Well, have you ever peeped into your own mind and asked, "What are my thoughts like?" You think you know. I am not so sure. I think if you saw on a lantern screen all your thoughts for one day you would be very much surprised.

There is a fairy tale of a magic flute which had the power of compelling everyone who heard it to speak aloud the thought that was in his mind. If you had that flute played to you, what strange revelations there might be! How ashamed you would be if the mean, wicked, discontented, and selfish thoughts which lurk at the bottom of your mind should all speak out!

And remember, your thoughts are *you*. Both what you say and what you do come from what you think. The angry blow would never be struck but for the

angry thought. Even although they never come to words and actions, bad thoughts are bad for you and for others.

They are bad for you, for they may spoil your whole character. You know that a man who indulges covetous thoughts may become a miserable miser, and a man who nurses a revengeful thought may do some dreadful deed. They are bad even for your health. People may make themselves ill by peevish discontented thoughts, and good thoughts help to make sick people well.

It is not so easy to see how your thoughts can hurt other people, but it is true. You will often hear someone say to another, "Why, you have said exactly what I was thinking!" In some strange way, which we cannot yet explain, people do influence each other by their thoughts, and you are unconsciously a good or a bad influence on the people you are with.

Perhaps you think you cannot help your thoughts. They wander here and there, and you cannot tell how they come and go. Someone has said about this that you cannot help a bird alighting on your head, but you need not let it make its nest in your hair. You cannot help a thought coming into your mind, but you need not make it welcome to stay. Each time you let it come you make it easier for it to come again. The first time it comes over a new path to your mind, but the second time it comes on the road made the first time, and every time the road grows easier and

wider till at last it is a broad highway. Then it is difficult indeed to stop the traffic on it. The first time a bad thought comes you are shocked and sorry. That is the time to attack it, for the second time it does not seem so bad, and after that you are accustomed to it.

And how will you attack it? Well, the best way to attack it is to crowd it out, to fill your mind with good thoughts so that there is no room for bad ones. If you leave your garden empty, weeds will spring, but if you fill it with flowers the weeds will find no place to grow.

There is a very lovely poem, called "The Shepherdess," which pictures the thoughts as a flock of little white sheep, with their owner as the shepherdess. The shepherdess watches her sheep in case they should wander into forbidden dangerous places. She keeps them pure and clean. She leads them to the high hill where the fresh fragrant breeze is blowing, there to feed on the sweetest mountain pasture she can find.

And so the shepherdess of thoughts watches her flock. They may run and skip and be as merry as they like, but they must not go into wrong places. They must keep away from everything that will soil them and make them impure. They must be fed on clean pasture—the thoughts and words and deeds of noble men.

Perhaps you would like to hear the poem we have been talking about. Here it is.

She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
She guards them from the steep;
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.

. . . . . .

She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.
She is so circumspect and right;
She has her soul to keep.
She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.[1]

What are you doing with your thoughts? Are they running wild anywhere, or are they a flock of little white sheep, kept and tended by the shepherdess?

[1] A. Meynell, *Poems*, 69.

WHERE ARE YOUR AFFECTIONS?

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.—Col. iii. 2 (AV).

Boys and girls are constantly setting their affections on certain things.

In an Industrial School which I know, I noticed that the boy who wore "buttons" seemed very interested in his work. He opened the door with the solemnity of a grand footman: he helped to hand round the cakes at the annual tea-meeting with the bearing of a trained waiter. "You will be a waiter yet, and a good one," I said to myself. His affections were set on that above everything else. Doubtless the superintendent watched him, and would give him the necessary chance. It reminded me of a story I heard about a man who had risen to great wealth and power from being a poor boy. Someone said to him one day with a sneer, "I remember when you used to black boots." "Yes," answered the other; "and didn't I always black them well?" He had set his affections on getting on, and had succeeded. These were wise boys. Here is a story about another.

A poor Italian greengrocer, living in France, was saying good-bye to her boy. She had great ambitions

for him. "My boy," she said, "when you come back, try to come back *somebody*." The lad reached Paris and managed to get a situation in which he worked very hard. When other fellows were out swinging their canes and smoking, he was trying to learn things. His study was just a little attic. He worked on and on; he had set his affections on being *somebody*. One day a great man was taken ill, so that he could not prepare a speech he had promised to deliver. He sent to the attic for this young man, and asked him to take his place. The young man did it, and his speech made a great stir. Next morning, everyone was asking—"Who is the fine orator?" He rose until, at thirty-two, he was the leader of Paris, and the greatest speaker of the Republic. When he died men said, "The Republic has lost its greatest man." His name was Gambetta; some of the big boys and girls may have heard of him. His life is an example of perseverance and industry.

But the text says, "Set your affection on things above." People who have the best of success in this world are apt to forget that there is a heaven. During a walk through the woods a gentleman believed he had lost a watch-trinket on which he set great value. He retraced his steps, but no longer saw the graceful outline of the trees, the green abundance of the leaves, and the tracery of the white clouds upon the blue sky. He was looking downwards among the fallen and parched leaves, the scanty grass, the gnarled roots, and

the unfragrant weeds which hemmed his pathway. One bit of gold made him alive to what was below him, and dead to what was above him. Money can draw away men's hearts from the beautiful facts of the spiritual life to the refuse and weeds of the world. The Christian looks up and not down.

There was a famous painter called Guido. One day he was asked from what models he got his beautiful female faces. Guido called to a dirty, ugly-looking Italian beggar, and told him to stand looking up to the sky. Then the painter took a brush, and painted a most lovely woman's face. The beautiful thought was in himself. It did not matter how ugly the model was. Boys and girls, if we have high and beautiful thoughts the ugliness that is in the world cannot hurt us.

You say you cannot understand what is meant by setting your affections on things above. In the form of an Allegory, Bunyan tells the story of a man who had come to realize that to set one's affections on the world meant, in the end, destruction. He felt very miserable, and did not know what to do. Setting out to escape from it, he met a man called Evangelist. "What shall I do?" he cried. "Do you see yonder wicket gate?" Evangelist asked. The man said "No." Then said the other, "Do you see yonder shining light?" He said, "I think I do." Then said Evangelist, "Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which when thou knockest, it shall be told what thou shalt do."

Boys and girls, you know the shining light. Does it not come to you when you read a book telling of noble deeds? It comes to you sometimes when you have said your prayers. You feel it when you sing certain hymns. You sing "Nearer my God to Thee," don't you? And at times you imagine you understand the words. It is the shining light. To repeat the words of Evangelist, "Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto; so shalt thou see the gate, at which when thou knockest, it shall be told what thou shalt do."

On what are you setting your affections?

"THANK YOU."

Be ye thankful.—Col. iii. 15.

I WONDER if you ever noticed how often St. Paul reminded those to whom he wrote to say "thank you." I expect he found that people in his day were just as ready to forget that little word as we are to-day.

Sometimes your parents have to remind you to say "please" and "thank you," and you don't like it; still, you do say these words, because you know you won't get what you wish without them. Now, I want you to learn to say "thank you" not only with your lips—that is easy enough—but with your whole heart, which is a very much bigger thing.

But what does it mean to say "thank you" with your heart? Well, I think it just means making the best of the things you have, being glad that you have them, and grateful to God for sending them. It means looking on the bright side, and putting all ugly grumbling and complaining right out of your way. And I think, too, it means trying to do something to make somebody else happy because of the good things that have come your way.

Now, I want to give you three big reasons why we should try to grow a "thank you" heart. Because,

you know, it is a thing everybody can grow if they begin early enough, and try hard enough, and ask God to help them.

1. The first big reason is that it makes *you* happy.

It's a strange thing, but a true one, that the more we grumble and complain about things, the more we seem to have to grumble and complain about, and the more we thank for, the more we seem to have to thank for. The same things look very different if we look at them in a different way.

When you wake up in the morning of a chill and cheerless day
And feel inclined to grumble, pout or frown,
Just glance into your mirror and you will quickly see
It's just because the corners of your mouth turn down.
Then take this simple rhyme,
Remember it in time,
It's always dreary weather in countryside or town
When you wake and find the corners of your mouth turned down.

If you wake up in the morning full of bright and happy thoughts
And begin to count the blessings in your cup,
Then glance into your mirror and you will quickly see
It's all because the corners of your mouth turn up.
Then take this little rhyme,
Remember all the time,
There's joy a-plenty in this world to fill life's cup
If you'll only keep the corners of your mouth turned up.[1]

[1] Lulu Linton.

Some of you read fairy tales. And you know that very often the story turns upon the possession of some wonderful charm that will make disagreeable things nice, that will change an ugly beast into a beautiful prince, or open the door into some treasure cave.

Well, we each possess a magic charm that will make ugly things beautiful and disagreeable things nice, a charm that will make "the corners of our mouth turn up" and lead the way into the treasure cave of happiness. And what do you think the name of that charm is? It is just "Thankfulness."

Once upon a time there was an old lady who had had a great many troubles and worries, but her face was so sweet and happy that everybody liked to look at it. One day a fretful woman came to her and asked how it was she always seemed so happy. And what do you think the old lady said? Well, she told her fretful friend that the secret of her happiness was that she kept a Pleasure Book. Every evening for years and years she had written down in this book something nice that had happened to her that day. And she had never missed an evening. She had always found something to write in the book. It might be a very little thing—a pleasant walk, a visit from a friend, a cheering letter—but down it went.

So if you want to be happy count up all the nice things that happen to you. That is just one way of saying "thank you" for them; and you will be surprised how many you will have to count.

2. But the second reason why we should be thankful is bigger than the first one, and it is that we make *other people* happy. It makes others glad when they see us wearing a cheerful countenance, and it makes them glad when we thank them for the little services they do to us.

Several years ago a lady was coming out of a public building when the heavy door swung back and prevented her exit. A street urchin sprang forward and held the door open for her, and as she passed through she smiled on him and said, "Thank you."

"Did ye hear that?" exclaimed the urchin to a small companion. "Hear what?" "She said 'Thank you' to the likes o' me!"

The lady was much amused. "Why, it always pays to be polite," she said, and thought no more about the incident.

Some years later the same lady was doing Christmas shopping. She received exceptional courtesy from one shop-walker whom she thanked. The man said, "Pardon me, madam, but you gave me my first lesson in politeness."

Then he explained that he was the urchin who had held open the door for her years before and that her courteous "Thank you" had given him the ambition to do something in the world. The very next day he had gone and offered himself as message boy in the establishment where now he held a position of trust.

3. But the biggest reason of all why we should try

to grow a thankful heart is that *God loves to have our thanks.* He loves to have them and we so seldom give them to Him.

There is a legend which tells how the Angel of Prayer and the Angel of Thanksgiving were sent down to earth with two huge baskets to gather up the desires of men and bring them back to God. And very soon the Angel of Prayer had his basket full to overflowing, while the basket of the other Angel was almost empty.

We are always ready to ask God to grant our requests, and He loves to hear our prayers, but when He sends us what we ask for we very often forget to thank Him. Do you think it is quite fair? Remember God loves to receive our thanks too, and He never despises the "thank you" of the smallest child.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

Ye are all the children of light.—1 Thess. v. 5 (AV).

LAST winter I played a round game with a company of young people. In it the question was asked, "What does a certain word suggest to you?" (The word was mentioned.)

Now, when a minister chooses a text for a children's sermon, the first thing he does is to ask himself, "What do the words suggest?" If he thinks of the text I have given you a great many things will probably occur to him.

Let me tell you some of them. He will remember the daisy. Modest though that little flower be, it will persist in making its voice heard. It will keep saying, "I am a child of light." Boys and girls scarcely ever think of the daisy as being beautiful: if they do pluck a bunch of them, is it not just to put a needle through the heart of them and make a daisy chain, or to throw them at each other for fun? Yet, how much we owe to that wee crimson tipped flower for making our fields beautiful. Its name is really a shortened form of "day's eye." It was called the "day's eye" because it was so sensitive to light and darkness. I don't

know if you have ever noticed that the daisy shows its face only in the sunlight; when clouds are over the sun it shuts itself up. If you went into a daisied field at night you would find all the little blossoms closed as tightly as possible. The daisy is certainly a child of light.

And the minister will hear the bird's song. His thoughts will perhaps go back to an early morning on a hillside after he had been camping out all night. He will hear the grouse beginning to talk to each other, and the mountain stream lilting its "bonnie havers" oh so sweetly, for the day is new and bright with the rising sun. Even in his days in the city, it has surprised him to discover that the summer sun is never dull enough to silence the blackbird and the thrush in his own garden. In spring he wakens up to a regular chorus. Then his thoughts will go higher; he will think of days when the world was young, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." At last he will come back to everyday life, and to the boys and girls he knows. For a boy who is straight, who has no dark corners, is a child of light. He has nothing to hide, nothing to make him afraid of being found out. His whole nature is so full of light, that it is impossible to surprise him or take him at a disadvantage.

Let me tell you of two children of light. Once the keeper of a lighthouse fell ill when he was cleaning the lantern. By lighting-up time he was dying. His

wife took his place and lit up, but had to come hurrying back to his bedside. Presently one of the children ran to her and said, "Mother, the lantern is not turning." The father had not had time to wind up and set the heavy machinery which made the light revolve. It could not be left stationary lest it might be mistaken for another light. It had to be turned by hand, and the mother could not leave the dying father. What do you think those children of ten and seven years old did? They went up the long stair, and all the night they toiled at the heavy levers of the hand turning-gear and kept the light revolving. It guided the ships homeward and pointed the way to those that were outward bound. And the captains saw it and blessed it. And the great ships and little ships passed, and none of all the company knew that the light which shone so clearly was kept going by two pairs of brave little arms and two brave little aching hearts whose mother was weeping and whose father was dying. They themselves knew they were children of the light, and, however sad they might be, they felt they must keep the light going.

Boys and girls, don't you want to be like them? They were brave—they were little heroes. Think what the turning of that lighthouse lamp meant on that stormy night. You will be worthy of the name "children of the light," when you keep your faces open to the great Sun, Jesus Christ. You can do that in your prayers and at your play. You can do it at your work. Hide nothing from your

Heavenly Father. Once a little boy who had heard his mother speak of Jesus Christ said, "I think 'Christ' is a beautiful word, it shines like a light in a dark place." He spoke the truth without knowing it.

STAND FAST.

Stand fast.—2 Thess. ii. 15.

This is the motto of one of the bravest of the brave Highland regiments—the Gordon Highlanders. The original battalion of the Gordons, now the Second Battalion, was raised by the Duke of Gordon in 1794, and I want to tell you one or two stories which will show you how they have stood true to their motto.

The 2nd Gordons, then called the 92nd Highlanders, fought in the battle of Waterloo. At one point in the battle they were exceedingly hard pressed. Their numbers were reduced to three hundred, and opposed to them were three thousand Frenchmen. Then came the order—"Ninety-second—you must charge, for the troops on your right and left have given way." Without a moment's hesitation the Gordons formed four deep and rushed forward into the midst of the opposing force. For a moment it seemed as if the charge must end in absolute disaster, but just then the Scots Greys, a cavalry regiment, dashed up with the cry, "Scotland for ever!" The Gordons echoed the cry, and catching hold of the stirrup-straps of their comrades were carried forward with them to death or victory. So ended one of the most famous charges in history.

Throughout the years the Gordons continued to win a name for staunchness and bravery. Then came the capture of the heights of Dargai in 1897, when they covered themselves with fresh glory. The heights had been occupied by the enemy and had to be retaken. Several regiments had made the attempt and failed. At last the Colonel of the Gordons said, "The Gordons will take them!" They stepped out unflinchingly under a hail of bullets, and in the first rush reached the point which had baffled the other troops for three hours. It took three rushes to carry the heights, but the Gordons took them in the end. It was during this fight that Piper Findlater of the Gordons won the V.C. When all the pipers had been put out of action and he himself was shot through the ankle, he sat up and continued to play in order to inspire his comrades.

In the European War the 2nd Gordons formed part of that glorious Seventh Division which, along with the Third Cavalry Division, has gained immortal fame by its defence of Ypres. For a week 30,000 British soldiers held at bay 240,000 Germans until the main British army from the Aisne arrived. So magnificently did they hold out that the Germans said afterwards that they were under the impression that they were opposed by four Army Corps—about six times the number of men.

Of the 2nd Gordons their chaplain wrote that under murderous fire they advanced to an attack in perfect order and with as great steadiness as if they were in the Long Valley at Aldershot.

Now it is a curious thing that this motto of the Gordon Highlanders was also a favourite motto of St. Paul. No fewer than six times he repeats it, and I think we could not do better than take it as our motto too. We thrill when we hear of these magnificent deeds of glory, but the best way we can show our appreciation of them is by trying to be worthy of them. And so I want to give you three "Stand fasts."

1. Stand fast by your *work*. Don't lose heart because you get into difficulties.

> If at first you don't succeed,
> Try, try, try again.

In a certain mill in a certain woollen manufacturing district there is made a certain kind of cloth which is very much sought after. This cloth has a curious name. It is called *mungo*, and I want to tell you how it came by its name.

One day the manager of the mill came to the owner. He pulled a very long face and he told his chief that they had a great quantity of a particular kind of material on their hands. Somehow or other nobody wanted to buy it. "It's a dead loss," he complained, "it won't go." "Won't go?" exclaimed the owner, "it's no use talking like that. It *mun* go!"

So he gave orders that the cloth should be widely advertised. And soon there was such a rush for it that not only was their stock sold out, but they had

to manufacture a great deal more to supply their customers. And so it was that the material came by its name of *mungo*.

Now if you want to get over your difficulties you must meet them in that spirit. When you get stuck over anything—a sum, or a seam, or a musical scale, or any bit of hard work, just say to yourself, "It *mun* go." Don't give in. Stand fast.

2. Stand fast by your *friends*. Stand by them in fair weather and foul. A little boy was once asked what a friend was, and this is the answer he gave—"A friend is a chap what sticks to you even after he has found you out." That is the only true kind of friendship. Stand fast by your friends even when you find they are not perfect. Stand fast by them in their absence just as much as in their presence. Stand fast by them when other people are running them down. Have courage to put in a good word for them. Don't desert a comrade because he is down on his luck or unpopular. He needs your friendship all the more just then.

3. Stand fast by your *ideals*. Stand fast by the things you know to be right and true. Don't be laughed out of them, don't be frightened out of them. The world is a hard place in which to keep ideals, but never forget that it is the people with ideals who have lifted it out of the rut.

Once there was a Scotch boy called Jamie who went to sea. And before leaving home he promised his mother that every night he would kneel down and

say his prayers just as he had done every evening since he could remember.

At first he got along quite smoothly, but one night as he knelt down a rough sailor boxed his ears and said, "None of that here, sir!" This made another sailor very angry and he gave the bully a good thrashing.

The next night Jamie thought it would be easier to say his prayers in bed, so he crept into his bunk without saying them. No sooner had he lain down than someone clutched him and hauled him out again. It was his defender of the previous night. "Kneel down at once, you young rascal," said he: "Do you suppose I'm going to fight for you and you not say your prayers?"

Jamie never neglected his prayers again. He grew up to honour God. Years after, when the *Great Eastern* laid the Atlantic cable, the commander of the vessel was Jamie. But the Queen had knighted him, and he was now Sir James Anderson.

So stand fast by your ideals, boys and girls; don't let anyone take them from you. They are among your most precious possessions and will, please God, make fine men and women of you.

DISAGREEABLE BUSY B'S.

Busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.—1 Tim. v. 13.

HAVE you ever watched a bee gathering honey? Have you noticed how it flew to a flower, pushed its way into the cup or heart of it, stayed there for a moment, came out looking very busy and important, buzzed on to the next blossom, dived into it, and so on, and so on. You thought as you watched it that it thoroughly deserved the name of the "busy bee."

Well, our sermon to-day is about "busy b's" of another kind—"busy b's" called "busybodies." Not a bit nice—these busy b's!—for though they are busy enough they gather no honey. They spend their days poking into things, sure enough, but the things they poke into are other people's affairs, and instead of distilling honey they distil poison.

If busybodies stopped at poking their noses into other people's business it would be bad enough, but they do worse; they go on to spread abroad what they have found out—or think they have found out. They not only collect stories, they retail them as well. They are talebearers and mischief-makers.

Now, the word "talebearer" looks as if it should mean one who bears tales both good and bad, doesn't it? Well, it doesn't. The remarkable thing about the word "talebearer" is that it always means one who carries bad or evil tales. There is no English word which means a carrier of good tales. And that proves that talebearing or gossip is always bad.

One of the old nations of the world called a talebearer by a name meaning a "seed-picker." They thought of him as a little bird picking up here a seed and there a seed. It wasn't a bad idea. But the poor birdie makes a better use of his seeds than the talebearer does of his. He eats them; but the talebearer collects them only to drop them again. He doesn't keep them to himself. If he did he would not be so dangerous. But he drops a seed, and like all seeds it grows. It grows, and grows, and grows, till he would not recognize it again if he came across it. It grows till perhaps friendships are destroyed, and hearts are broken, and lives are spoiled.

And the worst of it is that the mischief-maker often pretends to be doing you a service. We all know the person who comes to us and says with a very solemn face, "I think it's only right you should know that So-and-so says such-and-such about you." He repeats a story that was never meant to be repeated. He repeats it only half truly. He misses out what would take away the sting, and the result is that you feel miserable. You can't meet that friend without remembering what he is said to have said. And your

friendship is killed—all because a horrid busybody whispered half a dozen cruel words.

Shall I tell you what to do the next time someone offers to tell you a tale like that? Look him straight in the face and say firmly, "You need not tell me. I do not wish to know, and I certainly shall not listen." Take for your comfort this—the motto of a northern university—"They say. What say they? Let them say."

But suppose we are busybodies ourselves—and lots of us are. What then? Seeing that our failing may cause so much misery, how shall we cure ourselves?

I shall give you three cures.

1. Be busy about your own business instead of other people's. Those who are continually prying into other folk's affairs usually neglect their own. Nobody can do two things at once and do them equally well. If you devote yourself to your own business so as to make it a success, you will have no time to interfere in that of others.

2. If you are tempted to tell spicy stories or interfere in other people's matters try to put yourself in their place. Try to think how you would enjoy it if the positions were reversed and you were they and they were you. That should close your mouth. If it doesn't, if you feel you *must* say something, try this: force yourself to say good instead of evil. If your tongue *must* be busy let it be busy saying good. It can't possibly say two things at the same moment.

It is not like a piano, on which you can strike two notes at the same time. You can strike only one note on the tongue. So let it be the right note.

3. The third cure is—well, I think I'll tell it you in a story. In a certain town in the east of Scotland there lived—there still lives—a very good man with a very witty tongue. He is a minister, and like most ministers, he has to listen to many tales from members of his congregation. One of his older members was in the habit of regaling him whenever and wherever she met him with stories of her fellow-members in the church. He tried to check her politely, but she pretended not to understand. At last one day when she accosted him on the street with a particularly gossipy tale, he said—

"Mrs. So-and-so, you are a Christian—are you not?"

"Eh, sir, I hope so."

"And you believe in prayer—do you not?"

"I do that."

"Well, will you do something for me?"

"Gladly, sir, gladly."

"Go home, and pray to be delivered from the spirit of gossip."

TIMOTHY.

Timothy, my beloved child.—2 Tim. i. 2.

TIMOTHY was the youngest and best-loved of St. Paul's fellow-workers. He was to St. Paul what St. John was to Jesus—the disciple whom he loved, the man after his own heart. To the childless apostle, Timothy took the place of a son. Of no other of his followers does St. Paul speak in terms of such affection and trust; no other of his disciples so completely understood his mind and heart.

Timothy is one of the few men in the Bible whose early history we know. We can learn something about his home and about his childhood and boyhood. He was born at either Derbe or Lystra in Asia Minor, about the time that Christ was crucified. His father was a Gentile, but his mother, Eunice, was a Jewess. To their boy they gave a name which means "honoured of God," and Timothy grew up faithful to his name—not only honoured of God but honouring Him.

Timothy's father died when the boy was very young, and the child received his early training from his

mother and from the old grandmother, Lois, who lived with them.

Now Lois and Eunice were very good women and they were anxious, above all things, that their boy should grow up wise and good. The training of every Jewish boy for the first five years of his life lay, and still lies, in his mother's hands. It is from her that he first learns to know and to reverence God's commandments. As soon as he begins to speak his training starts, and the first words he is taught to repeat are—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." These words he learns when he is only three years old. Then he is taught some of the shorter psalms and, most interesting of all, his birthday text. This is a verse of scripture which either begins or ends with, or else contains, the letters of his own name. You can imagine how proud the little Jewish boy is when he can repeat his birthday text.

Lois and Eunice must have taken particular pains with Timothy because in the letter which he writes to him thirty years later St. Paul specially remarks upon his early training and his knowledge of Scripture. As Timothy's father was a Gentile it is likely that he did not go to school so early as did most Jewish boys and that it was from Eunice that he heard the familiar Old Testament stories which you all know and love. He would learn, too, of the promised Messiah; but one story he would not hear—the story of how the Messiah had come in deed and in truth, had come as a little babe to a stable in Bethlehem; of how He had lived

a life of love and sacrifice and had died at last upon a cross. That story he was to learn from the lips of Paul when he was fifteen years old.

Timothy was sensitive, conscientious, affectionate, and sympathetic. He drank in earnestly all that he could learn at his mother's knee; and he learned so well that when he met Paul it was just an easy step from his early knowledge of God to the fuller knowledge in Christ Jesus.

Boys and girls, there is never any religion like the religion you learn at your mother's knee; there are never any prayers quite like the simple prayers she teaches you to lisp almost before you can speak. That religion and these prayers will go with you all your days. And if you, like Timothy, are eager to learn, eager to obey, they will be the best preparation for all that life holds for you.

When Timothy was fifteen something happened that was to change the whole course of his life. Two missionaries—Paul and Barnabas—came to Lystra. They spoke of one, Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had sent to be the Saviour of the world. They told how He had been put to death by the Jews and how He had risen again from the dead. They also healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth, and when, in consequence, the crowd would have worshipped them as gods, they restrained them, saying that they were only men like themselves. Then hostile Jews came from two other towns and turned the people against the

missionaries. Paul they stoned, and afterwards they dragged him outside the city and left him for dead. But the apostle was only bruised and stunned. Presently he arose and was able to walk back into the city, which he left the following day for the neighbouring town of Derbe.

It must have been during this visit of St. Paul to Lystra that Timothy made the great resolve — the resolve to become a follower of Jesus. How do we know this? From two things. In writing to the Corinthians Paul speaks of Timothy as his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord," a title which he applies only to those whom he had been the means of leading to the faith which is in Christ Jesus. And then in the sixteenth chapter of Acts we are told that when St. Paul returned to Lystra seven years later Timothy was already a Christian "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." So we know that Timothy must have been converted some time previously, that is, on the occasion of St. Paul's first visit.

Timothy had listened to Paul's stirring words; he had seen how the apostle was willing, not only to speak, but to suffer for the Master whom he loved. His chivalrous young soul went out to the apostle, and there and then he opened his heart to the message he brought. Perhaps Timothy helped to restore Paul when he was left for dead outside the city gates. Perhaps he took him home to his mother's house and cared for him that night and saw him on his way in the morning. Of one thing we may be sure—he would

put Paul at the top of his list of heroes; he would consider him more than worthy to be placed alongside of Gideon and Samson and Daniel. And many a time in the years that passed before they met again, he would think of him and imitate him, and try to prove worthy of him.

Perhaps the other Christians in Lystra looked down on Timothy when he was baptized. They may have thought of him as only a boy. They may have said, "Oh, it's only young Timothy." But "young Timothy" was destined to become Paul's greatest convert and one of the foremost apostles of the Early Church.

Seven years pass away before we again get a glimpse of Timothy, but in these seven years he has not been idle. He has been working diligently in the Christian communities at Lystra and the neighbouring city of Iconium, and he has been earning for himself golden opinions among the Christians in these places.

At the end of the seven years St. Paul, on his second missionary journey, came again to Lystra. He had just parted with his fellow-worker Barnabas, and was in need of somebody to fill his place. When he met Timothy, now a young man of twenty-two, his heart went out to him and he had a strong desire to take him with him. And Timothy consented to accompany him.

Now, Timothy has sometimes been accused of lacking courage, and I want you just to think for a moment how unjust this accusation is. Timothy had till now

lived a sheltered life. He had been brought up by women, without a father's bracing influence. His mother was all in all to him and he to her. So far as we know, he had never been more than twenty or thirty miles from home. And yet, when St. Paul called him to a life of hardship and danger, when he called him to go far away into unknown regions and amongst strange people, he obeyed without hesitation. And you must remember that to be a missionary in those days was a very different thing from what it is now. Think of the difficulties of travelling which made the distances ten times as long as they are to-day. Think of the dangers by land and by sea. Timothy must have known that very probably he would never see his mother or his home again. Do you think, then, that he was a man lacking in courage? Assuredly no. Timid he may have been, sensitive he certainly was. But timidity and sensitiveness do not spell cowardice. On the contrary, it is those who are afraid and who yet go forward in spite of their fears who are the greatest heroes.

Timothy was ordained by the laying on of hands of the elders at Lystra and then he said farewell to his old home and set out with Paul. At first they travelled in Asia Minor, but at length they came to Troas on the coast of the Ægean Sea, whence they crossed into Europe. Together they visited the towns of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berœa, and Corinth. Timothy's thorough knowledge of Scripture stood him in good stead with the Jewish converts and he soon became noted as an

evangelist. By and by the missionaries returned to Asia Minor, and except when Timothy was sent on a mission into Macedonia, we may think of him as mostly at the side of Paul until the latter visited Jerusalem for the last time and was made prisoner.

When St. Paul was taken as a prisoner to Rome, Timothy followed him. He visited him in prison, and it is interesting to note that the epistles to the Philippians and the Colossians and to Philemon, which were sent by St. Paul from Rome, are written in the joint names of Paul and Timothy.

Some time after St. Paul was released from prison the two apostles were together at Ephesus, and St. Paul left Timothy in charge of the church there when he himself returned to Europe. Now Ephesus was a very wicked place. It was the centre of worship of the great heathen goddess Diana, and contained a gorgeous temple built in her honour. Timothy had to work amidst tremendous difficulties and it was to encourage and fortify him in his work that St. Paul wrote the two Epistles to Timothy.

The Second Epistle was written when St. Paul was imprisoned for the second time at Rome. It closes with an urgent request that Timothy should come to him. The aged apostle knew that his doom was sealed, that the end was not very far off, and he longed above all things to have his "beloved son" with him at the last. Whether Timothy reached Rome in time we do not know, and what happened to him after he was bereft of his faithful friend the Bible does not tell us.

Tradition says that he became Bishop of Ephesus and that he was stoned to death by the Ephesian mob for protesting against the wickedness of their heathen worship.

In the church of San Paolo at Rome there is a gorgeous tomb which is said to contain the bones of St. Paul. Close beside it is another tomb, more modest in its pretensions, which bears the name of Timothy. Here, according to legend, the bones of the great apostle and his faithful disciple rest side by side. We should like to think that this is the case, but whether or not, of one thing we are certain. The two who loved each other so truly on earth are united forever in the presence of the Master they both loved and served —Paul, and Timothy, his "beloved child."

PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT.

A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.—2 Tim. ii. 15.

In the fifteenth century there lived in the city of Florence two great sculptors, Brunelleschi and Donatello. Brunelleschi designed and partly executed the beautiful dome of Florence Cathedral. This dome is one of the finest bits of architecture in Europe. It took forty years to build, and although it was not finished till fifteen years after Brunelleschi's death, so perfect were his plans and so wonderful his methods that those who followed after him had not the slightest difficulty in completing his work.

Donatello confined himself chiefly to the carving of statues. His statues are famous all the world over, and one of them—a statue of St. George clothed in mail—is so life-like that when Michael Angelo saw it he shouted "March!"

Brunelleschi and Donatello were firm friends although Brunelleschi was older by nearly ten years. When Donatello was fifteen they went to Rome together, the boy to study his art, the older man to make copies and plans of the famous buildings in the city so that he might have material for the designing of his wonderful dome.

Now Donatello at this time conceived the idea of carving a life-size figure of Christ on the Cross. He carved it in wood, and when he had finished his task he sent for his friend that he might have his criticism of the work. But when Brunelleschi saw the statue he told the boy that he had carved the figure like a labourer, and that when he was engaged on such a task he must put all his heart and soul into it, and all his skill. Thereupon Donatello challenged his friend to do better, and Brunelleschi accepted the challenge.

For weeks he laboured with wonderful love and skill, until the statue stood complete. Then he went to Donatello's rooms and invited him to dine with him. He was carrying the materials for the dinner and these he handed to the boy, telling him to go on before and he would follow.

When Brunelleschi arrived home he found Donatello standing in front of the statue gazing in rapt wonder. On the floor were smashed eggs and other remains of what should have been the dinner.

Brunelleschi reproached his friend for spoiling the meal, but the other turned upon him, "What does it matter?" he cried, "I have had feast enough! You have carved the figure of Christ like an artist; mine is the work of a day-labourer."

Do you know, boys and girls, that Donatello discovered a wonderful secret that day—I wonder if you have discovered it yet?—the secret that the work that is most worth doing, the *only* work that is worth doing

is the work into which we put all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Shall I tell you why? I think there are two reasons.

1. First, because it makes the work *more pleasant.* You are not carving statues, boys and girls, you are just wrestling with multiplication tables, or Latin verbs, or problems in algebra. Or perhaps you are starting life as an errand boy; and you have to sweep out the shop, and clean the windows, and polish the brasses, and tidy up after other people.

Well, these things don't seem very glorious, but you can make them glorious. There are two ways you can do your work. You can just get through it because it has to be got through, or you can put your heart into it. You can take a pride in having your verbs correct or getting into the inner meaning of your problems. You can take a pride in having your windows cleaner than anybody else's and your brasses brighter. And when you do that your work will become a joy, not just a labour.

There was a boy, once, who was sent from school into a lawyer's office. He thought law was the driest subject under the sun, and he grumbled so much about it that the other clerks nicknamed him "Grumbling Geoffrey."

One day the lawyer, who was a friend of Geoffrey's father, sent for the boy and gave him a bit of sound advice. He told him, among other things, that there were just two kinds of workers in the world—those

who worked to live and those who lived to work. The first class worked just for bread and butter; the second loved their work and made it their hobby. And there was no question as to which class got the most pleasure out of their work.

Well, Geoffrey was possessed of a good deal of common sense in spite of his grumbling. He had been trying the "work to live" plan and that had failed, so he thought he would try the other for a change. He began to ask questions about what he was doing, to take notice of the letters and deeds he had to copy, to dip into law-books. By and by the subject began to interest him, and he got more fascinated as time went on. If any legal question cropped up at home, he was always ready to discuss it and give his advice.

One day a friend said to him, "It's a dreary subject law, isn't it?" "Dreary," said Geoffrey, "why, it's the most interesting subject in the world!"

2. But there is a bigger reason why we should put our heart into our work, and that is because by so doing we do *better* work. The work that is done with a grudge is never done well. It is done scantily and shabbily and often without thoroughness. It won't stand inspection. It is often not even nice to look at from a distance.

And, boys and girls, remember that the work you are doing is the work Christ has given you to do, and He is worthy of our very best. He gave the best for us. Should we not give our best for Him?

On the top of a hill at Athens stands the ruins of the Parthenon—one of the most beautiful temples in the world. It was built more than four hundred years before Christ in honour of the goddess Athena Parthenos. Round the walls of this temple were wonderful carved figures. The backs of these statues were placed against the wall and were never meant to be seen, and yet they were as carefully carved as the fronts, "for," said the sculptor, "they are for the goddess."

The work you are doing, boys and girls, the character you are carving as you work, is for a far greater than any heathen goddess. Your work may be very plain and humble, but it is what Jesus wants you to do for Him. Take pains to do it in the very best way you can, study to show yourself "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Then some day you will hear His glad "Well done!"

A VESSEL UNTO HONOUR.

A vessel unto honour . . . meet for the master's use.—2 Tim. ii. 21.

Do you know what happens when somebody special is coming to pay you a visit, or when you are going to have a party at your house? I can tell you. Mother gets out all the best silver and the best dishes to honour your guest or guests. The best silver teapot, the best cream jug and sugar bowl are taken out of the bags in which they have been laid away, and they are polished up till they shine like mirrors and reflect you and everything else in the room. The best spoons and forks also come out of their cases, and they, too, get a "shine up," and so do the company knives. Then mother takes a chair to the pantry and hands down the good dishes from the top shelf, and they are all washed or dusted. It is a lot of trouble, this "making ready," but you don't grudge it. You are so anxious to honour your visitors and put before them the best you have.

But I hope that when you are trying to have things extra nice what happened to a certain missionary's wife in South Africa will never happen to you. The Governor of the Province was coming to dine, and she

was naturally most anxious that everything should be right. She planned the dinner, and she lectured the black cook, and she made the black boys who were to wait go through a rehearsal of waiting at table. At the last minute she paid a flying visit to the kitchen to see if all was going well, and she noticed that the paper frill or collar for the pudding dish was not laid out in readiness. So she said to the cook, "Be sure not to forget the collar for the pudding." Now, it was a pity she said "collar," for poor black cookie thought she must mean something else, something specially grand in honour of the Governor. So he paid a hurried visit to his master's room. And lo and behold! half an hour later when the pudding appeared at table, the dish was surrounded by two of the missionary's white collars neatly pinned together!

Now, to come to our text. St. Paul was thinking when he wrote it of something rather like this honouring of a guest by setting before him the best dishes. He was thinking of God's children as dishes or vessels in a great house. He was a prisoner in Rome at the time, and very likely he was living not far from one of the palaces of the Cæsars, where costly dishes of gold and silver were used at the Emperor's table.

But the apostle was thinking not only of the costly vessels, but of the plain useful vessels too—those of wood and earthenware which did not appear on the Emperor's table but were kept in the kitchen. And St. Paul said God's children were like these two kinds

of dishes. Some were plain humble earthenware sort of people, who would never make a show in the world, but would live a quiet life doing jobs that were not at all ornamental. Others were gold or silver, they had a fine education and a high position and perhaps a name that was famous. But, said St. Paul, though God's children resembled the different dishes so far, they were unlike them in one particular. Humble or exalted, poor or wealthy, earthenware or gold—it mattered not—each was a vessel unto honour, fit for the master's table and meet for the master's use if—and this was the one condition—if they were clean.

Now, this seems to me a very cheerful text, for it tells me that I don't need to be a great person in the world's eyes before I can serve Christ. He can use me though I be ever so humble. You see, we can't all be kings or dukes or governors or statesmen or M.P.'s. Lots of us have to be shopkeepers and engineers and masons and plumbers and carpenters and scavengers. It doesn't matter a bit to God whether we call our work a trade or a profession. All he asks is that we should be clean.

What do I mean by clean? I don't mean scrubbed and shining with soap, though that, of course, is important too. What I mean is that we should be morally clean—straight and true and honourable, above all meanness, scorning all deceit, hating all lowness of whatsoever kind it be. "Death rather than dishonour," should be our motto, and the earlier we begin to make it our watchword the better.

Two men who had been schoolfellows when they were boys met one day in a foreign land. They began chatting about the other boys who had sat at the same desk with them. "What's become of Brown?" said one. "Oh," replied the other, "he's manager of a Bank in London now. One or two fellows have told me he is the most honourable man in the city—straight as a die." "I'm not surprised," said the first man, "he was always so straight at school. And what about Smith?"

"Ah well, poor Smith!—that's a sad business! He came a cropper, and made a horrible mess of life. Just before I left England he was sent to prison for ten years—he was a lawyer, you remember—for taking his clients' money." "That's hard," said the other, "but I don't wonder. He was a horrid little cheat at school."

Boys—yes, and girls too—one of the headmasters of Harrow used to say something like this to his boys the day they left school: "Whether you are very clever or very popular does not matter much. But if it is known by those about you that you would not for any consideration in the world depart by a hair's breadth from the strict line of honour, then, there is nothing—nothing too hard for you in life."

Yes, and I would add this—there is no limit to how you may serve Christ if you refuse to do what is unkind or nasty or low or disgraceful. Honour yourselves, children. So doing you will honour God and become "a vessel unto honour . . . meet for the master's use."

LEFT UNDONE.

Set in order the things that are wanting (AVm "left undone").—Titus i. 5.

If you turn to the first chapter of Titus you will find in the middle of the fifth verse these words: "Set in order the things that are wanting." Now, if you look at the word "wanting" you will see a little figure 2 before it, and in the margin of your Bible you will see another little figure 2 with the words "Or, left undone" after it. That just means that "left undone" may be read instead of the word "wanting." The translators have given us a choice.

I wish to speak to you to-day about "the things that are left undone," because the world would be a very much more comfortable, a very much happier, and a very much better place if it weren't for "the things that are left undone." You know, it is a queer thing, but many good people are far more worried about the wrong things they *do* do, than the right things they *don't* do. And yet Jesus condemned people not so much for what they *did* do, as for what they *didn't* do. Do you remember the parable of the Good Samaritan? It was the priest and the Levite who "passed by on the other side," who just didn't do the kind deed they

might have done, that were blamed. And do you remember that other parable of the Last Judgment, where the sheep are separated from the goats? It is the people who just didn't do things who are condemned, those who omitted to help the hungry, and the thirsty, and the wretched, and the needy.

1. Well, you know little things grow out of big things, and so I want to say to you first—watch the *little* "left undones" of every-day life.

Don't leave bits undone in your work. Whatever you do, do thoroughly. Have the bits that don't show just as nice as the bits that do show. Little "left undones" lead to big disasters sometimes. It was because the artillery failed to cut the barbed wire properly that one of the great battles of the War was lost and thousands of brave lives were sacrificed unnecessarily.

When you take up a piece of work go right through with it till you have completed it. Finish off all your loose ends. It was said of Coleridge, the poet, that he was a giant in intellect but a child in performance. He was head and shoulders above his fellows in ability, but he was the greatest failure of them all because he seldom finished anything he began. If you want to accomplish anything worth doing, you must finish it right to the end.

And then, when you have finished anything, whether work or play, don't leave your things lying about for other people to put away. It isn't playing the game,

and if you continue to behave like that you will become a horrid nuisance when you grow up.

2. But there are bigger things in life that get left undone. There are kind words that are never spoken, and kind deeds that are never done, just because people are too shy, or too lazy, or too thoughtless, or too selfish to say them or do them. And so somebody goes sad because we forgot to smile, and somebody goes disheartened because of the word of praise we omitted to say, and somebody goes weary because of the burden we didn't help to lift.

Three hundred years ago there lived a great Portuguese poet—Luis de Camoens. As a young man Camoens fought bravely against the Moors and lost one eye. Later he travelled to India. There he protested against the cruelty of the Portuguese settlers to the native Hindoos. For this he was arrested and banished to China. On his way to China he was shipwrecked and only just escaped drowning. But he managed to save the papers on which was written his finest poem, "The Lusiads."

After sixteen years Camoens returned to Lisbon with an old Indian servant, Antonio. The poet was penniless and sick, and Antonio begged for him in the streets. A nobleman visited him in his wretched room and requested him to write verses for him. Camoens asked for fourpence, just fourpence, so that Antonio might buy some coal, for they were starving. The grandee departed without giving any help, and shortly

after the poet was removed to an almshouse, where he died.

Over his grave they placed a stone on which was inscribed:—"Here lies Luis de Camoens; he excelled all the poets of his time; he lived poor and miserable; and he died so, 1629."

But after a while people began to feel rather ashamed of that inscription. So they took away the stone and erected a fine monument in its place. And on this other stone they gave an account of the wonderful work of the poet and praised him as a great Portuguese. But they said nothing about his miserable death.

Boys and girls, do you think it made any difference to Luis de Camoens that his fellow-countrymen erected a grand tombstone to his memory? Would it not have helped him ever so much more if they had showed him a little kindness in his lifetime? He asked for bread, and they gave him a stone.

Don't wait till it is too late to be kind, don't be one of the "left undone" people, for—

> It isn't the thing you do, dear,
> It's the thing you leave undone,
> That gives you a bit of heartache
> At the setting of the sun.

3. There is some special bit of work in the world "left undone" for each of you to do. You wouldn't be here if there weren't, and it won't be done if you don't do it. Find out what it is and do it. God will show you how if you ask Him.

A BEAUTIFUL LETTER.

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.—Philem. 10 (AV).

THERE are certain characters in the Bible whom you like better than others. Some boys will tell you that their favourite character in the New Testament is the apostle Paul; not the Paul who writes the Epistles but the Paul of the adventures and the shipwreck. His Epistles are just letters, but with one exception they are all about the special subject he himself loved and studied most. You know that there are learned men called specialists, who give their whole time to the study of one subject. They love to speak about it to those who are interested; and they sometimes write books that others may get to know what has been a joy to them. Paul was a specialist. His subject was the religion of Jesus Christ and his Epistles were just letters which he wrote to people whom he wanted to instruct about Jesus and His words.

Among the letters there is a specially short one which is different from all the others. It was written to a friend of Paul whose name was Philemon and it is about a private affair connected with this gentleman's household. It is a beautiful little letter, very kind,

very clever, and very polite. I wonder if any of you boys and girls ever read it through.

Philemon was a wealthy man in Colosse. He had a lovely home with numbers of servants or slaves, and he could have anything he wanted simply for the asking. But he did not get spoiled, for he was a Christian, having evidently been converted through hearing Paul preach. He took a great interest in the progress of Christianity. We gather that he had a church in his house where the followers of Jesus gathered for worship. They had to meet in houses because of persecution. In Philemon's house we believe the whole household including the slaves would join in the service, not always because they were Christians, but because their master asked them to do so.

One of the slaves, whose name was Onesimus, had stolen money from his kind master and had then run away. He managed somehow to get as far as the city of Rome, a place so big that he could hide in it, as unhappy people sometimes do in London. Strange to say, Paul happened to be there preaching, and the poor unhappy Onesimus heard him. Now, although many of Paul's letters are very learned, Onesimus, who saw things like a child, felt that Paul said things that he understood. He spoke about sin and forgiveness, the very thing the poor slave wanted. He was converted; he became a new man. Of course he confessed everything to Paul about taking the money, and the great apostle saw something in the simple slave lad that he could not help loving. But he said, "Go

straight back to your master and confess everything; I will give you a letter to him." That letter was the Epistle to Philemon.

Back went Onesimus over the long road, and faced the master whom he had cost more than he had ever profited, and to whom he had been a trouble rather than a help.

What was in Paul's letter do you think?—A beautiful introduction of Onesimus to his old master, not as a slave but as a Christian. Paul refers to him as "my child." Although he has not known Onesimus long, he feels sure he is a Christian, and he asks Philemon to take him back, assuring him that he will find his old slave helpful now. He pleads for him, for the love's sake of an old man (Paul the aged) who is also a prisoner. "The chain is on my wrist, surely you will not refuse me." Paul knows how to ask a favour. "Perhaps he has been separated from you only that he may go back, not as a slave, but as a beloved brother," he says to Philemon, and he adds, "specially to me, but how much rather to thee." These words, though they do not appear difficult, are very fine and mean a great deal. Then Paul goes on to say, "If, then, thou countest me a partner receive him as myself." Christ's words may have been in Paul's mind, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." If not, he was certainly thinking of how Jesus loves us and of how Christians should love one another.

Then he takes Onesimus' debts upon himself. "If he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put

that to mine account, I will repay it." But Philemon did not need to be reminded that he owed a great deal more to Paul, he owed *himself*.

Every phrase Paul uses to sway Philemon regarding his opinion of Onesimus reminds us of the laws of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ founded. Paul was His slave. He lived for Him, he ruled his life by His, he was a specialist in the religion of Jesus Christ.

Boys and girls, Paul could not have had such a love for Onesimus but for his thinking about Jesus Christ "day in day out," just as one thinks about a very dear friend.

GO ON.

Let us go on.—Heb. vi. 1 (AV).

I WONDER if any of you know the coat of arms of the old Transvaal Republic? It is the figure of a waggon and it now forms part of the coat of arms of the Union of South Africa.

And why did the Transvaal Republic choose a waggon as their emblem? Well, it reminded them of the old days when the first colonists trekked from the Cape seeking a new country where they could settle. And everywhere they went the waggons went with them. They were the symbol of the restless life they led.

Now, life is very much like a journey. We must go on. We can't stand still. There are many ways in which we have to go on and I want to speak about two or three of them.

1. First, we have to go on getting bigger and older. (Of course the grown-ups don't get bigger, but they get older—much faster than some of them like!) You are a good bit bigger than you were this day last year. Not long ago perhaps you tried on the boots you wore last winter and they pinched terribly, or you wore a frock that was made a year ago and the hem had to be

let down. And this day next year you will be bigger still. You just can't help growing. You have to go on.

I knew a little girl once who was about five years old. One day she was playing in a big cupboard when she came upon her old cradle. Of course she didn't remember ever having slept in it, but she tried to get into it and when she found she couldn't, she sat down and cried. Don't you think she was a very funny little girl, and a very silly one too? She was ever so much bigger and stronger than when she slept in that cradle and she was able to do far more than she could then, and yet she sat down and cried because she wasn't little enough. Now it is silly to sit down and cry for things that are past. We have just got to make the very best of the age we are at and the things we have. And then we shall be ready to go on.

2. And, second, we have to go on getting wiser. You know much more than you did a year ago. You can spell bigger words and do more difficult sums. And this time next year you will know still more. Even if you didn't go to school you would know more, because we can't be in the world without learning something. The main thing is that we grow wise in the right way. Because there is a kind of wisdom that is not good. Try to learn the things that will make you useful men and women, things that will make *you* gladder, and other people happier.

3. But there is another way in which we must go on.

Every day we go on getting a little bit better or a little bit worse. We can't stand still here either, only, you see, there are two directions in which we can move —either backward or forward. Which way are you going to choose?

Once a little girl was saying her prayers, and this is what she said, "Lord Jesus, make me gooder and gooder till there is no bad left." Would you like to go on getting gooder and gooder? There is just one way to do it. You must put your hand in Jesus' hand and He will help you all the way.

MIRRORS.

A mirror.—Jas. i. 23.

THE text to-day is one you all know. Perhaps the girls know it better than the boys, but I think the boys may have seen something like it occasionally. The girls use it to help them to tie up their curls and put their hats on straight, the boys to flash light in somebody's face on a sunny day. Well, now, I have almost told you the name of it. Yes, it is a mirror.

You will find the text in the first chapter of the Epistle of James, the twenty-third verse. The mirrors St. James knew were not very like ours. In those days they had no glass mirrors such as we have. Instead they used thin plates of polished metal. Generally these were of bronze, but some of the finest were of silver. You may imagine it was not quite so easy to get a clear reflection of yourself in one of these as in the nice glass mirrors you have at home.

Now, we all carry a mirror about with us—you, and I, and everybody else. It is called the mirror of the soul; and in that mirror we receive the reflection of the things and the people and the happenings with which we are surrounded. We may not realize that

we are carrying these reflections, but other people see them in us. If you are very much in a friend's company you begin to adopt his way of speaking, his little tricks of manner, his habits and thoughts and ideas. Very likely you are not aware of it, but other people notice it.

Once the errand boys in a certain part of London began to whistle out of tune. At last somebody discovered that the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and there was discord in them. The boys did not know there was anything the matter with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had copied them. And so you will copy the people you are most with, and you will borrow your thoughts very much from the books you read—almost without knowing it.

So you see it matters very much what kind of company we keep, and what kind of books we read, and what kind of games we play. And the strange thing about these magic mirrors of ours is that the younger we are the brighter they are, and the clearer and stronger are the reflections. Therefore where we take our mirrors matters much more when we are young than when we are older. Let us try to carry them always where they will reflect the things that are beautiful and true. For the things they once reflect they go on reflecting to the last.

But when we are thinking about our own mirrors we must remember that other people are carrying mirrors

too, and as we cannot help receiving reflections in our mirrors, so we cannot help casting reflections in theirs. We cannot help influencing other people any more than they can help influencing us. Your younger brothers and sisters, your companions at school, even your fathers and mothers are carrying your reflections every day. Do you know the sad story of the small boy who lost the naughty word? Here it is as told by himself:—

I lost a very little word
  Only the other day;
A very naughty little word
  I had not meant to say.
If only it were really lost,
  I should not mind a bit;
I think I should deserve a prize
  For really losing it.

But then it wasn't really lost
  When from my lips it flew;
My little brother picked it up,
  And now he says it too.
Mamma said that the worst would be
  I could not get it back;
But the worst of it now seems to me
  I'm always on its track.

Mamma is sad; papa looks grieved:
  Johnnie has said it twice:
Of course it is no use for me
  To tell him it's not nice.
When you lose other things, they're lost;
  But lose a naughty word,
And for every time 'twas heard before
  Now twenty times 'tis heard.

If it were only really lost,
Oh, then I should be glad;
I let it fall so carelessly
The day that I got mad.
Lose other things, you never seem
To come upon their track;
But lose a naughty little word,
It's always coming back.

Whether we like it or not, other people pick up our words and our ways and copy them. What kind of reflection are you casting?

Most boys and girls have heard of radium, and some of them may have seen it. Radium is a marvellous element that has been discovered within very recent years. It produces heat and light, and its rays of light are so strong that they can penetrate quite easily through steel or other metals. One of the most wonderful things about the light of radium is that it is reflective. If you shut up a small quantity of radium in a cardboard box for a short time and then take it out, the box will continue to give forth rays of radium for some weeks.

Now, there is one place we must not forget to take our mirrors and that is into the presence of Jesus, the Light of the World. If we take them to Him, He will shine upon them with a perfect radiance. Then we shall reflect that light and help to bring brightness and gladness into the world.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY.

Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.—Jas. v. 12.

THERE is a quaint proverb which says that "a hero's word and an elephant's tooth remain fixed." I never tried acting dentist to an elephant, so I can't answer for the tooth; but I know that it takes a hero to stick to his word through thick and thin.

Now, of course, we are all going to be heroes; we haven't quite got there yet, but we shall some day, and so one of the things we have to notice is that our word "remains fixed." And that just means that when we say a thing people can depend upon us: they know that we are speaking the truth and intend to carry out what we promise.

I think there are two things we have to remember if our word is to remain fixed.

1. The first is that we *say what we mean.*

There was a boy once who was sent on an errand to a farm on a hot summer's day. The road was long and dusty, and when he arrived at his destination he was tired and thirsty. Now, the farmer's wife had just been baking apple tarts. She had them all set out on

a wire tray to cool, and they looked most "scrumptious." And through a door at the back of the kitchen the boy could see into the dairy with its great basins of creamy milk. The farmer's wife asked the boy if he would take a glass of milk and a tart. He said, "No," and he meant, "Yes," and she took him at his word! I don't know why he said "No"; perhaps he felt a bit shy. But years after, when he was a grown-up man, he still regretted the glass of cool milk and the juicy apple tart he missed that hot summer day.

Now if we are going to stick to our word, it is a good thing, first of all, to make sure that we say what we mean, and that what we mean is something wise and good. Don't be in too great a hurry. Think twice before you speak. Think twice before you make rash promises.

There was a king once who was very much delighted because a young girl danced beautifully before him. And because he was so pleased, he made her a foolish promise. He promised to give her whatever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom. And the girl asked for the head of a good and great man. Then the king was exceeding sorry. Yet because he had promised, and because he was afraid of what his friends would say if he broke his promise, he granted the girl's request, and John the Baptist was beheaded.

2. The other thing we have to remember is to *mean*

what we say, to mean every bit of it, and to mean to carry it out.

Once upon a time a French sailor was caught in a storm. And he cried aloud to St. Christopher of Paris, promising that if the saint would save him he would give a candle as big as himself to be burnt before his statue in the great church in Paris.

"Be careful what you promise," said a friend who was kneeling beside him, "for I don't suppose you could pay for that candle if you sold all you possess." "Hold your tongue," retorted the other rudely. Then he added—but in a whisper, lest the saint should overhear—"You don't suppose I shall give him so much as a tallow candle, if I once get safely out of this!"

Now, you are not going to play shabby tricks like that. You are not going to make promises that you have no intention of carrying out. Nor are you going to break your promise just because it is going to cost you a little pain or trouble to keep it.

One day a gentleman was walking along a country lane when he heard a sound of sobbing. On turning a corner he came upon a little girl crying as if her heart would break, while on the ground lay the shattered remains of an earthenware bowl that had contained her father's dinner. Well, the gentleman tried to comfort her as well as he could, and the little girl asked him if he couldn't mend the bowl. No, the bowl was past mending, but he would give her some pennies to buy a new one. When he took out his purse he found it was empty, but he promised to bring

her the money to that spot at the same hour the following day. So the little maiden dried her tears and went home smiling.

Next day at the appointed hour he was about to set out for the lane when a note was handed to him asking him to go to Bath at once to meet a friend who was spending a few hours in the town. He had not seen the friend for many years, he might not see him for many years to come, but—there was the child in the lane. She was counting on his coming and a gentleman could not break his promise. So with regret he put the idea of going to Bath out of his mind and kept his promise. That man was Sir William Napier, a great historian.

This sermon seems to be all stories, so I shall give you one more.

You know that it is the custom for witnesses in a court of justice to swear a solemn oath on a Bible, that they will speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Some centuries ago an Italian poet called Petrarch was called as a witness into a court of justice. All the witnesses in front of him swore their oaths as usual, but when it came to Petrarch's turn, the judge closed the book. "As for you, Petrarch," he said, "your word is sufficient."

Boys and girls, if we keep to our word always people will believe in our word, and a "yes" or a "no" from us will be enough.

And that reminds me that we had almost forgotten

the text, which would never, never do. You will find it in the fifth chapter of James and the twelfth verse —"Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay"—and that just means—"Say what you mean, and mean what you say, and stick to it." Let your word be fixed like the elephant's tooth.

THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART.

The hidden man of the heart.—1 Pet. iii. 4.

THE hidden man of the heart! The hidden man of *your* heart! I wonder what he is like! I'm afraid very few of you could tell me; but perhaps your father or mother, your sister or brother, or your school friends could describe him to me pretty exactly. If the walls of all the rooms you live in were covered with mirrors instead of wall-paper you might often get a glimpse of him yourself. For he leaps to your eyes when you are angry, he lurks in the corners of your mouth when you grumble or sulk, and he hides in the hollow of your clenched hand when you raise it to strike someone smaller or weaker than yourself. You may seem quite a meek and mild and milk-and-water child at ordinary times, but let something cross you, and out pops the wicked little hidden man of your heart, and blazes away. You have all heard people speak of the black dog on your back. They would be much nearer the truth if they spoke of the black man in your heart. And no black dog, be he ever so black, could be blacker than is sometimes that hidden man of the heart.

Sometimes, I said, for the hidden man is not always

black and wicked. He is sometimes white and good—an angel, not a demon. And this hidden man looks out of your eyes too. When? When they are full of pity or love for others. He lurks in the corner of your mouth. When? When your lips are speaking true or gentle or forgiving words. He is found in your hands. When? When they are busy helping others.

The fact of the matter is, that the hidden man of the heart is not one man. He is twins. He is not one self, he is two. Do you know a kind of weatherglass which is like a little wooden house? Two little wooden figures, a man and his wife, live in this little house. They have painted clothes and they are rather like Mr. and Mrs. Noah—only better. When the weather is going to be fine and sunny the old lady comes out for a stroll, but when there is going to be rain or storm she retires into the house, and the old gentleman comes out to take the air. The two hidden selves in the house of our heart are something like that.

That being so, what are we to do with them? Are we to let Mr. Bad Man be continually showing himself or are we to do all we can to encourage Mr. Good Man to come to the front?

Boys and girls, it lies largely with ourselves. We can say whenever Mr. Bad Man shows his ugly, scowling face, "Back, sir, back! I'll have none of you." And the oftener we treat him like that and send him to the right about, the easier it will grow for us to keep him out of sight. For, believe me, the less we let him show

himself, the smaller he will grow. If we refuse to let him come out, he will dwindle and dwindle and dwindle, till he becomes such a tiny dwarf that he will almost disappear. And the tinier he grows, the taller and finer will grow his twin brother. And as Mr. Good Man grows stronger he will make it easier for us to fight his bad brother, for he will be able to help us to keep him under.

Yes, and Someone else will help us too—Someone who had only one hidden man in His heart and that hidden man all good. Jesus, who knew no sin, and yet had to fight temptation, will help us to subdue and conquer the bad man of our heart.

THE RIGHT KIND OF ORNAMENT.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.—1 Pet. iii. 4 (AV).

I EXPECT the boys will think this is a girls' text. "It's only girls," they may say, "who wear jewellery and that sort of thing." Well, in a sense they are right. Peter really intended his remarks, in the first place, for women. In his day wealthy women were very extravagant in their dress. Everybody seemed to be trying to outvie everybody else. Fine and costly garments were worn and many precious jewels. And Peter wrote to the Christian women that they were to aim, not at these gorgeous outward adornments, but at the inner adornment of the heart—a meek and quiet spirit.

But this ornament is peculiar. It can be worn by boys as well as by girls, and it suits them equally well, so the text applies to boys also.

What is "a meek and quiet spirit"? Well, a meek spirit is a spirit that is gentle and patient and forbearing, and a quiet spirit is one that doesn't fuss, that doesn't worry other people.

Perhaps some of you will say that meekness is a silly sort of virtue, and that you don't want to possess it. But remember that meekness doesn't mean weak-

ness. It doesn't mean that you are to make a door-mat of yourself. It means strength and self-restraint. If you are meek it shows that you have learned to control your passions, that you are master of yourself, that you are too great to give way to petty tempers. Many a strong and brave man has worn this ornament and it has suited him admirably. Moses wore it, and so did Stephen, one of the bravest of the Bible heroes, and a man who prayed for his enemies with his dying breath.

I was reading again the other day a story about Pericles, the Athenian statesman. Pericles was a great leader of men, a wise ruler, and a brave fighter. And he was always calm and dignified in his behaviour. One day he was acting as magistrate in the market-place, and all day long a man railed at him before the crowd. Pericles took no notice, but went on quietly hearing and dealing with cases. At last evening came and the statesman set out for home, but not even then did he get rid of his tormentor. The man followed him shouting cruel and untrue things all the way. When Pericles reached his house it was quite dark, so he called his servant and told him to bring a torch and light his enemy home. Which of these two men do you think was the greater and stronger—Pericles the meek and self-restrained, or his angry tormentor?

Now, there are four things I should like you to remember about this ornament. Four is a big number, is it not? But they are all easy, and perhaps if you try hard you will be able to remember them.

1. First, this ornament is the *most precious* one you can wear. Peter says it is "of great price" in the sight of God; and it will be of great value to yourself. There are many precious stones in the world—diamonds and rubies and emeralds and sapphires—but if you possessed them all and lacked a meek and quiet spirit you would still be poor. The boy who can control his temper when other people are losing theirs, who can remain calm when other people are angry, and who can give the soft answer that turns away wrath, has gained a priceless possession.

2. And, second, this is the *most becoming ornament you can wear.* It suits everybody.

I expect most of the girls are proud to possess a bit of jewellery of their own. If someone gives them a nice brooch or a pretty necklace they are very pleased. But remember that no ornament you wear will ever become you so well as the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Shakespeare says of one of his heroines that

> **Her voice was ever soft,**
> **Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.**

And it is excellent to have more than your voice soft and gentle. A woman who is always scolding and quarrelling is one of the ugliest sights anyone can see. Would you like to be that kind of woman or would you rather be calm and gentle and restful—the kind of woman to whom others bring their troubles and in whose company other people like to stay?

3. This ornament is the *most lasting* you can wear.

Gold may get tarnished, pearls may lose their lustre, but the meek and quiet spirit lasts for ever. You can carry it all through life and into eternity.

4. But the best thing of all about this ornament is that *everybody can have it.* Sometimes people cannot afford to buy jewels or fine clothes, but everyone may possess this ornament. Of course it is more difficult for the passionate boys and girls to obtain it, but it is not impossible.

When Peter, who wrote these words, was a younger man he himself was not fond of wearing this ornament. He was impulsive and quick-tempered and always wanting to put in his word. But when he grew older he became patient and forbearing. Do you know where he learned to wear it? At the feet of Jesus, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

And Jesus can still give the meek and quiet spirit that remains calm and unmoved amid all the storms of life. He can give it and He can help you to keep it. Will you ask Him to give it to you?[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are: Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. v. 5.

THE CAKE OF COURTESY.

Be courteous.—1 Pet. iii. 8 (AV).

I FOUND the recipe for a very good cake the other day. It was called "the Cake of Courtesy."

You have often tasted this cake and it has a very nice flavour, but perhaps you never considered what it contained. For courtesy is made up of many good things well mixed together. Would you like to know the recipe?

1. The first ingredient is *Unselfishness*, or *Consideration for others*. That is the main part of the cake, so we shall call it the *Flour*.

A courteous person is always ready to do a good turn to another, and he does not stop to consider the cost to himself.

There was a small boy once who used to go to church and who never went without taking his offering for the collection plate. If he had left his penny at home he would have felt himself terribly disgraced.

One Sunday his father and mother were unable to go to church so the small boy went alone, and of course the penny went too.

There was a strange lady at the top of the pew, and

when the time came for the collection to be taken this lady looked into all the divisions of her purse and found she had forgotten to bring her offering. She did not seem much disturbed about it, but the small boy felt very uncomfortable. He thought it would be a dreadful thing for anybody to pass the plate, and he wondered what she would do.

Nearer and nearer came the elders with the plates, and redder and redder grew the small boy. At last he could stand it no longer. Shuffling up the pew he pressed his penny into the lady's hand and whispered hoarsely, "Here, you take this, and I'll get under the seat; I'm small and they won't see me."

That is what the Flour in our cake means—unselfishness and consideration for others.

2. Next we must rub in a little *Butter* to make our cake rich. Flour makes an excellent foundation, but unless we add some butter our cake will be rather poor. Consideration for others is a very good thing, but it is the way in which we show our consideration that makes it valuable, and the thing that helps us to think of others in the right way is called *Sympathy*. Sympathy can put itself in another's place and feel as that other feels. It makes life richer just as butter makes a cake richer. You see, it's the way you do a courteous deed that makes it courteous. Some people do a kind thing in such an awkward, clumsy sort of way that the kindness is robbed of a great deal of its beauty, and is even liable to be misunderstood.

I have known grown-up people who wanted to be kind and courteous to people who were poor or lonely; but they set about it in such a queer way that the people they wanted to help thought they were being patronized or pitied, and their backs were set up, and their fur was rubbed all the wrong way, and the kindness was all lost. Now if the people who wanted to be kind had been able to forget themselves entirely, and had put themselves in the place of those they wished to help, and had tried to feel as they were feeling, none of those uncomfortable things would have happened.

3. After we have got the butter well rubbed in, we must add a little *Sugar*. A cake wouldn't be a cake without sugar, would it? Of course not! And courtesy wouldn't be courtesy without *Gentleness*. It is the gentle part of courtesy that keeps it from banging into a room and slamming the door behind it. It is the gentle part that is kind to dumb animals, and weak things, and old people.

There is a story told of a brave officer who fought in South Africa. When he was returning home, his mother, who was an invalid, was giving instructions to the footman who was going to the station to meet him. The man had recently come to the house, and he had never met the officer, so he asked his mistress how he would know him. She replied, "Look out for a man who is helping someone. That will be my son."

The man went to the station, and when the train arrived he eagerly scanned the passengers as they passed out of the station. At length he saw a gentleman helping an invalid to alight. He went to him and, mentioning the name of the officer he had been sent to meet, asked if he was that officer. And the gentleman replied that he was, and that he would come as soon as he could. So the mother was justified in her belief in her son's unfailing courtesy.

Some people have the idea that you can't be gentle and manly at the same time. That is quite a mistaken idea—in fact, so mistaken that it is utterly wrong and untrue.

4. We want our cake to have a nice taste, so we shall put in a *Flavouring* of *Humility*. Don't let us be too grand to be courteous. The finest ladies and gentlemen are those who never consider whether they are ladies and gentlemen at all, because they are too busy thinking about other people.

There is a splendid story told of General Lee, who was the leading general on the Southern side in the American Civil War. One day he was travelling on the railway. In the aisle of the car was standing a poor old woman who could not find a seat. The General rose politely and gave her his seat. Then some officers who were in the car, but who had taken no notice of the old woman, crowded round the General, each begging him to take his seat. But Lee replied, "No, gentlemen; as none of you could find room for an

old woman, you cannot find room for Robert Lee!" And he left the car.

5. But we don't want our cake to be just a hard, solid lump; we wish it to rise well, so we must put in some *Rising Flour*. I think the rising flour ought to be *Courage*. Yes, it sometimes takes a good deal of courage to be courteous, especially if people laugh at you. Well, nobody that is at all worth minding laughs at courtesy, so why should we mind them?

6. I think we have everything now that we require, except an *Egg* to bind the cake. The egg shall be *Politeness*, because politeness is all through courtesy, and keeps it together. I may be mistaken, of course, but it seems to me as if some boys were almost ashamed to be polite. I often wish for some peculiar sort of special double magnifying-glass to see if their caps really are touched when I meet them. The attempt that is made is so very far from the real thing that it is almost impossible to recognize it. Don't be ashamed to open a door for a lady, or to pick up anything she lets fall; and don't, please don't, keep all the cakes, and the jam, and the butter, and the bread to yourself at table. Pass a few of them on.

Try to remember the ingredients of the Cake of Courtesy:—The Flour of Unselfishness as a foundation, the Butter of Sympathy to make it rich; the Sugar of Gentleness to sweeten it; the Flavouring of Humility

to season it; the Rising Flour of Courage to make it wholesome; the Egg of Politeness to bind all together. I hope you will have a nice hot oven, and that your cake will be a great success. And please send me a little bit when it is ready.

THE RIGHT KIND OF CLOTHES.

Be clothed with humility.—1 Pet. v. 5 (AV).

We have spoken about the right kind of hands and feet and eyes and ears and nose and tongue and memory and heart. Now, after we have got all those right, what do you think we ought to see to next? Well, I think the next thing we should consider is how to get the right kind of clothes. Clothes are rather important things, are they not? And none of us would like to wear the wrong kind. So will you turn to the First Epistle of Peter, the fifth chapter and the fifth verse, and there you will find your text—"Be clothed with humility."

The Greek word which is translated "clothed" has rather a curious meaning. The word is used only in this place in the New Testament. It refers to the overall or apron which the slaves wore fastened round their waist with a girdle. They put it on over their other garments to keep them from being soiled. So the word was connected with the lowliest service of the lowliest people.

I wonder why Peter used this word. I think it was because he wanted to tell the people to whom he was writing that they were to be ready to serve each other.

They were not to be ashamed of the lowliest service if that service would help somebody else. They were to put away all pride and haughtiness and make themselves of no account. And perhaps he was also thinking of the time when Jesus girded Himself with a towel to do a slave's work—to wash the disciples' feet.

Before Jesus came, humility was a much despised virtue. At the time He was born the Romans were the great conquerors of the world and the Romans were the proudest people on earth. Humility meant to them something mean and servile. A haughty, overbearing spirit was what they admired. It was Jesus who glorified humility and gave it a new meaning. He came to earth to serve. He was born in a lowly manger, did lowly work, went in and out among lowly people, died the lowliest and most shameful of deaths. And through all He was meek and lowly in heart, and taught His disciples that, as He had served them, so also they should serve one another.

Now there are two kinds of robes of humility. Some people mistake the one for the other, and I want to tell you about them both so that you may not fall into that error.

The first is the robe of *False Humility*, and it is a very ugly and unbecoming sort of dress.

The robe of False Humility is really just a very mean and shabby kind of pride. It pretends to be what it is not. Once there lived two rival philosophers. One dressed in the ordinary way, but the other wanted

to make a parade of his humility, so he went about in rags. And the philosopher who dressed like other people said of his rival that you could see his pride through the holes in his garments. Do you see what he meant? No humility is real humility that wants to make a parade of itself.

There are some people who go about the world pretending that they are worse than they are, or less clever than they are, in order to get others to praise them. These people are wearing the robe of False Humility. They don't really mean what they say, and if you agreed with them they would be very angry and disappointed. Never wear the robe of False Humility. It is sure not to suit you.

But the second dress is the robe of *True Humility*, and it is the best dress anyone could wear. It suits everybody, and it fits everybody, and it never goes out of fashion.

And what is true humility? True humility means having a right but modest opinion of ourselves and never considering beneath us anything that is good or right.

I want to give you three reasons why we should wear the robe of True Humility.

The first reason is that *all our gifts come from God.* Sometimes you hear people chattering about their cleverness, or their wealth, or their fine relations. But they forget that they would have had none of these things if God hadn't given them to them. If we are

cleverer than others we should remember that it is God who has made us so, and that He means us to use our brains for the good of other people. If we are better off than most, it is God who gives us our riches, and we should be grateful to Him and try to use our money to help those who are less fortunate.

The second reason is that *if we want to be of any use in the world we must be humble.* If we go to people with proud hearts and disdainful looks we won't be able to help them.

Once there lived in Persia a good shepherd named Dara. He rose to be head man of his village, and he ruled so wisely and so well that the King made him chief governor over a large province of Persia. By and by strange stories were told of him. It was said that he took money from the people by unjust means, and that he stored it in a huge chest which he always carried about with him wherever he went.

The story reached the ears of the King, and he determined to find out if it were true, so he journeyed to the city where Dara lived. The governor with a troop of archers met the monarch at the gate of the city. Near by stood a camel bearing a huge chest. When the King saw the chest he was very angry, and commanded that it should be opened immediately. His orders were quickly obeyed, and what do you think was found inside?—Just an old, ragged shepherd's coat.

Dara's accusers looked very much ashamed, but the King demanded to know the meaning of the coat.

Then the governor explained that this was the coat he had worn when he ruled over his native village. It had helped him to rule justly and kindly. He was afraid that he might become proud and vain and harsh, but when he looked at the coat it reminded him how poor and mean a man he had been, and it helped to keep him humble and kind.

The highest honour we can have in the world is just to be able to serve somebody else, but we shall never be able to do that unless we put on the robe of True Humility.

Lastly, we should wear this dress because *it is to humble people that Jesus comes.* He cannot enter the dwelling of the proud, and if we want Him as our Friend we must put away all pride and conceit out of our hearts.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are: Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 2 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4.

LIP LOVE AND TRUE LOVE.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.—1 John iii. 18.

THIS does not mean that we are never to say kind things, that we are never to say loving things; it means that we are not to stop short at saying them or talking about them; we are to do them.

The apostle John was the apostle of love. He writes more about love than any of the other apostles do. St. Paul wrote a whole chapter about love in one of his letters to the Corinthians, but St. John writes a whole letter about it. He writes about God's love to us, and our love to God and to one another, and he never seems to grow tired of the subject.

There is a beautiful legend about the apostle which perhaps you may have heard, but it is so beautiful that you won't mind hearing it again. It tells that when St. John was an old, old man, too frail to walk, he was carried by his friends into the church at Ephesus, and there he was asked to address the congregation. You can imagine how the people would wait breathlessly for his sermon, but it consisted of only a few words repeated again and again—"Little children, love one another." And when his friends asked him why he

would say nothing more, he replied, "Because it is the commandment of the Lord, and sufficient, if only it be fulfilled indeed."

That story is so true to the character of the gentle, kindly old man that we should like to believe it is more than a legend. But in any case the words of his sermon are the words he repeats in some form over and over again in his Epistle—"Little children, love one another." St. John had grown to be an old man, and he had come to see that nothing really mattered but love. If people only loved enough and in the right way there would be an end of envy, and selfishness, and strife, and malice, and all the ugly passions that spoil God's beautiful world.

In this verse he tells us how we are to love. We are to love not "in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." I think that verse tells us two things.

1. I think it tells us first that *love means doing.*

Love means doing, not just talking or feeling. You love your mother and you tell her so. At least I hope you do. I hope you are not ashamed to tell her that sometimes, because it means a lot to her. You love your mother. You would be highly indignant if any one told you that you didn't. You would knock down anybody who made fun of her or said anything untrue or unkind about her. You love your mother, but—how do you prove your love?

Do you grumble because the pudding is the same as

the one you had the day before yesterday, or sulk because she has forgotten to mend your football sweater? Do you do anything to make her life a little easier or freer from care? Do you run her errands? Do you treat her with courtesy? Do you obey her commands? Do you give up anything for her—your own way, your own will?

"I love you, mother," said little John;
But, forgetting his work, his cap went on,
And off he ran to the garden swing,
And left her the water and wood to bring.

"I love you, mother," said rosy Nell,
"I love you more than tongue can tell":
Then she teased and pouted full half a day,
Till mother was glad when she went to play.

"I love you, mother," said little Fan;
"To-day I will help you all I can;
How glad I am that school don't keep":
So she rocked the babe till it fell asleep;

Then, stepping softly, she brought the broom,
And swept the floor and tidied the room:
Busy and happy all day was she,
Busy and happy as child could be.

"I love you, mother," again they said,
Three little children going to bed:
How do you think that mother guessed
Which of the children loved her best?

"Father," said a small boy, "I do love you." "Do you love me enough to weed the garden as I told you yesterday?" was father's reply. Yes, love means

weeding the garden, it means doing things, doing the things that are dull and uninteresting, perhaps. And that brings us to the second thing this text tells us.

2. For I think it tells us that *love means doing the things that cost.*

There grow in the garden of life two flowers our souls to prove—
The passionate rose of self, and the spotless lily of love.
We never can have them both—one flower for each of us blows;
We choose the lily for aye, or for ever we choose the rose.

Love means giving up and that is why it costs. But listen.

There is a famous picture by a great artist which represents an angel standing by the cross of Christ. With his fingers he is feeling the sharp points of the thorns which had pierced the Saviour's brow, and on his face is a great look of wonder and astonishment. The angel cannot understand the marvel of that love, and we shall never understand it fully here below, but perhaps we can get a glimpse of what it means if we, too, are wearing the crown of thorns.

For I think the thorns stand for the irritations and worries of daily life, the little bits of self-denial and self-sacrifice. We speak of bearing Christ's cross, and I think the cross stands for the big troubles, the great sacrifices, but the thorns stand for the small things that hurt and annoy, the little daily sacrifices of love. We may not be asked to bear the cross; we may all

wear the crown. The thorns are the glory of love. It would be a poor, worthless thing without them. Shall we shrink from them, or wear them gladly and with joy?

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth."

WRITTEN IN INK.

Paper and ink.—2 John 12.

Do you remember the very first time you tried to write in ink? You had never been allowed to use anything but pencil, but one day Mother said you might use a pen and ink. Wasn't it glorious—and messy? And didn't you feel grown-up all in a minute because you were old enough to write in ink?

Well, here is a story about writing in ink, and though the rest of the sermon is for older boys and girls, even the tiny ones may understand the story.

There were once two little maidens named Nancy and Peggy. Nancy was four and Peggy was three. Nancy was a very smart little woman for her age. She knew already all the letters of the alphabet—the great printed capitals, the little printed letters, and even the written letters like those in copybooks. She knew them all by sight, but she could write only a few of them. She was sadly puzzled, for instance, by the written letter "e." She had diligently licked her pencil and covered sheet after sheet of paper with attempts at "e" but without success. Where she always failed was this. She started all right, but when she came to the loop of the letter instead of going up

the right side of the loop, coming back down the left, and then crossing the first line, she went up the left side of the loop then tried to come down the right and make it join neatly at the crossing.

One day Mother was ill and Auntie, who was in charge, left Nancy and Peggy alone in the sitting-room. By and by they grew tired of playing with their toys and looked for some other amusement. Presently Nancy spied the ink-bottle on the top of Father's desk. Beside it lay paper and pens and a blotting-pad. Ink was forbidden; but here was an opportunity not to be lost. She climbed on a chair, carefully lifted the writing things down, and brought them to the table. Then she drew in chairs for Peggy and herself and opened the blotting-pad. What do you think she saw? Why, a whole row of "e's" which somebody had scribbled on the blotting-paper. And suddenly it dawned on Nancy how they were made. "Oh, Peggy," she cried, "watch me make 'e's'!" She had no idea how to hold a pen, but Peggy thought you used it like a spoon, so she scooped up penful after penful of ink, and Nancy took each from her and made a few shaky-looking "e's" and several dozen blots on the paper. And they both gave the tablecloth and their hands and faces a liberal dose of blue-black ink, and then—Auntie came back. You can guess the rest of the story.

Now, boys and girls, God gives us our life like a clean white sheet of paper, but the writing on it is ours. When you are very tiny the things you do

seem to be written in pencil. You do what Mother or Nurse or Auntie tells you to do or not to do. If you are naughty or disobedient you get a whipping, or are put in the corner, or are sent to bed early; and somehow the punishment seems to rub out the naughty deed you had written on life's paper.

But a day comes when you no longer write life's doings in pencil. You write them in ink. You no longer do what someone else suggests. You think and act for yourselves. You wake one day to the fact that you are your own master, you can make your own life. You have learned how to write "e's." You are using ink, and the old days of pencil are left behind. There is no more rubbing out now of what you write; once written, it remains for ever.

Now, how are you going to write on life's paper? Are you going to write your story so that at the end you can feel proud of it? Or are you going to make it a blurred mess?—the ink there, sure enough, but all in the wrong place; blots and smudges everywhere; the writing slanting now to the right, now to the left, now jumping above the line, now dipping below it; what might have been a fair page, ruined; and no hope of making it better! For no eraser, however wonderful, can rub out the mistakes once we have written them.

No, we can never rewrite what once is written. But we can do this—we can try to write the lines in front of us better and more carefully. We have always the chance to make the present and the future nobler than the past.

Yes, and we have this too for encouragement. God is also writing on our page of life. Side by side with ours His writing runs. We do not see it now, but one day, when everyone's writing is being judged by Him, and we are feeling particularly ashamed of our blotted records, He will tell us to look at them again. And when we look we shall find that the writing we did has vanished, and instead of it there is on the paper God's record of our life. Where we saw only a blot and a failure, God has written that we succeeded though we never knew it. Where we saw a desperately uneven line, He has said that the unevenness was there because we were trying so hard to keep to the line and do the right. As for some of the bits of which we were proudest!—God's record may tell us that there we did no great thing, for we wrote it so, not for His sake, but that it might look well in the sight of our fellow-men.

Use your ink wisely, boys and girls; write each letter of life's story as in God's sight, and to please Him. Then you need not fear when at the last you lay your written sheets before Him.

THE MAN WHO LIKED TO BE FIRST.

Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them.—3 John 9.

SOME years ago I visited an industrial exhibition in one of our large cities. The exhibition was held in a big public park, and there were many interesting and curious things to be seen. There was a huge industrial hall where you could see all sorts of wonderful things in process of manufacture, and where the whirr of the wheels and the throb of the engines was so tremendous that you had to shout to make yourself heard. There was a beautiful picture gallery where some of the finest pictures in the world had been collected. There were buildings containing strange exhibits from all parts of the globe. There was an Irish village where Irish peasants were at work on lace and embroidery, and where everything was included except the pig. There was an immense concert hall where splendid concerts were given, and there were bandstands in the open air where some of the most famous bands in Europe played.

The first day I visited the exhibition I was talking to a friend outside one of the buildings when all at once there was a piercing shriek quite near, and then

something tore past us, panting and puffing and snorting. What do you suppose it was? It was a toy engine followed by a toy train, and in the toy train there were dozens of boys and girls going for a "joy ride." That engine made us laugh. It was so fussy and important. It seemed to say, "*I* am the exhibition. Look at me. You won't see anything so fine in a hurry again, and just observe how hard I am working." And yet it never got anywhere. It only carried a few toy carriages backwards and forwards over two or three hundred yards of toy rails. It would have been utterly useless for pulling a heavy goods train, or carrying passengers up hill and down dale over difficult ground.

Now there are some people who are like that toy engine. They make a great deal of noise and fuss. They like to be important, they like everybody to look at them, but they do very little real good in the world. Diotrephes, the man who is mentioned in our text, was one of those people. He liked to have the pre-eminence among the Christians in his church. And that just means that he liked to have the first place. He liked to boss everybody, he liked everybody to defer to his opinion, and he was very angry when anybody tried to interfere with him.

When John, who was the real head of his church, sent missionaries to it bearing a letter from himself, Diotrephes refused to receive them. But he didn't stop there. Perhaps he was jealous of John and of his influence. Perhaps he thought the apostle had not

taken enough notice of him. At any rate, he began to say nasty things about him. He said things that were unkind and untrue. Then he went on to forbid the other people in the church to receive the messengers John had sent. And all because he wanted to be first. You see to what lengths his love of power and self-importance led him.

Now I think most of us are inclined to be a little like Diotrephes. We all like to be first. Fortunately, most of us have brothers and sisters at home and companions at school to take the nonsense out of us; otherwise we should turn into very horrid people indeed.

There is a sense in which this desire to be first is a good desire. It is good to wish to make the very best of yourself—to do your very best work and win the very best place you can. The boys and girls who have a good ambition are kept from many mean and unworthy things. But this desire is not good when it makes you vain and selfish. It is not good when it makes you forget the rights and feelings of other people, when it makes you overbearing, and self-important, and unkind.

Diotrephes called himself a follower of Jesus, but I think he must have forgotten that Jesus told His disciples that he who wanted to be chief among them must be ready to serve others. Do you know the finest thing you can do? It is not to carry off prizes or make a great name for yourself. It is just to serve other people by kind and loving deeds.

Once a missionary in China sent home for an assistant. A young man appeared before the committee as a candidate, but he seemed so unlikely that they said he would never do. Then they thought he might do for a servant, so they asked him if he would be willing to be that. And the young man replied cheerfully, "Certainly. To be 'a hewer of wood and a drawer of water' is too great an honour for me when the Lord's house is building."

The true followers of Jesus are glad to do even the humblest work for Him. It is a good thing to be first. It is a finer thing to be able to take the second place sweetly and cheerfully. But the greatest honour of all is just to take the lowest place and to help others with humble and loving service.

HIDDEN ROCKS.

Hidden rocks.—Jude 12.

WHAT is the greatest treat when you are on holiday at the seaside? Paddling? No; better than that! Building sand castles? No; more exciting than that! Swimming? No; even jollier than that! What then? Why, going for a row in a boat, of course! That is "top hole," as you boys say, especially if you are allowed to steer for a bit, or to take an oar occasionally. If you add to these joys the joy of dangling a line over the side of the boat and catching fish to fry for tea, you will agree with me that an outing like that is hard to beat.

I have a piece of advice to give you when you go for such a row, and it is this. Take an old sailor man with you. Why? For two very good reasons—the first of which is that if you want to fish he will show you the best fishing ground; the second, that he will keep you clear of our text. Our text, like strong currents, is one of the dangers of going for a row on a coast you do not know. If you wish to find out what that danger is turn up the Revised Version of the Bible at the second last book, the Epistle of Jude. In the twelfth verse you will find two words—"hidden

rocks"—and in these two words you have both the text and the danger.

Any sailor will tell you that hidden rocks are one of the worst dangers of an unknown coast. Sometimes you can tell that they are there from the white line of foam which breaks over them, and at very low tide you may see their black tops showing above water. Sometimes the water is perfectly calm and smiling above them, and there is no sign to tell you that they are beneath. But if the sun is shining and the water clear, lean over the side of the boat and you will catch a glimpse of their dark forms. You will notice that some are sharp and jagged like the teeth of a saw, others are rounded or covered with a thick coat of seaweed; but you feel that though they may look different they are all capable of knocking a very nasty hole in the bottom of your frail boat. Sometimes the channel between their hungry teeth is so narrow that the boat has to be steered very carefully to get you safely through. You are not so keen on holding the tiller then; you are only too thankful to hand it over to someone who knows the passage.

Boys and girls, the sea is not the only place where we find hidden rocks. We find them in everyday life; and the rocks we find there are even more dangerous than those to be found in the ocean. Strange to say, too, the hidden rocks of life, like the hidden rocks of the sea, are of two kinds. The first show a path of white above them. They hoist a danger signal. But the

second are so hidden that we cannot tell they are there till suddenly one day a flash of light reveals them to us.

1. Now for the first kind—those that hoist a danger signal. These are, I think, the wrong things that we know quite well we should not do, yet straightway go and do them. We know that they are dangerous, but we deliberately run our little boat on to them. What would you say of a sailor who steered straight for the foam that marked a hidden reef? You would call him either mad, or foolish, or both. Well, when you know a thing is wrong and yet do it, let me assure you you are equally mad and foolish.

Of course I know that often it is more difficult to steer away from the rocks than to steer to them. People who want you to do wrong have a peculiarly maddening way of daring you to do it, and hinting that you are a coward if you refuse. When you come across such people, remember this: it is more splendid to be a moral hero than a merely physical hero. It is more splendid to turn a deaf ear to taunts and refuse to do what conscience whispers to be wrong, than it is to yield to mockings. Conscience is the foam on the hidden rock, and if we disregard it we deserve shipwreck. To run headlong into danger or temptation is no sign of bravery.

A gentleman once wished to engage a coachman. He had a number of applications from good men. How do you think he chose among them? He took them all to a certain road which lay between a hill on

the right side and a precipice on the left; and he asked each in turn how close to the edge of the precipice he could drive. One man said he thought he could drive within a foot, another said within nine inches, and a third was certain he could drive within six inches. The last man said, "I should keep as far from the edge as I possibly could," and the gentleman promptly engaged him.

2. What about the second kind of hidden rocks? I think these are like the many things we do every day without realizing that they are wrong. They lie hidden so deep in our heart and are so well concealed that we never suspect their existence; and just because we don't know of them, just because they hoist no danger signal, they are all the more dangerous. Lots of us would be tremendously surprised if we saw how selfish we were. We always thought that was just standing up for our rights. We should be surprised, and shocked, too, to learn that we were mean and greedy. We always imagined we were just taking our share of the good things of life. Then others of us would be astonished to find that we were spiteful and revengeful; we had always thought that was merely paying people back in their own coin. Perhaps a few of us had been thinking ourselves perfect and patting our own backs and despising others, but we called that self-respect and did not think how hideous a fault it was. Boys and girls, look into your hearts to-day. Ask God to flash some of His own light

into their darkness and discover to you their hidden faults.

Then, having discovered them, set about getting rid of them with His help. You know what is done to dangerous rocks in a harbour channel. They are blasted out with gunpowder. That is what we must do with the hidden rocks in our heart. We must blast them out; and we must ask God to help us to do it, for we shall never get rid of them without His aid.

WANDERING STARS.

Wandering stars.—Jude 13.

If you have been out on a dark night, especially about the month of November, you may have seen what looked rather like a rocket, or a series of rockets, falling from the sky. There was a flash and a long stream of light behind it, and almost before you could say, "Look!" it had vanished into darkness again.

People usually call these flashes in the darkness "falling stars," but they are not really stars at all. That name was given to them at a time when their origin and history were unknown. The earth in its journey through space meets small portions of matter. Now you know that the earth has a tremendous *pulling* power. That is the reason why, if you jump down off a high wall, you don't fly up into the air. And so when our world in its journey round the sun comes into the neighbourhood of any of these small portions of matter it pulls them towards itself. Before they meet the earth they are quite cold and invisible, but when they first enter the atmosphere which surrounds the earth they travel at the rate of from ten to forty-five miles in a second, and the speed at

which they travel makes them extremely hot and brilliant.

By far the greater number of these meteors are turned into gas before they reach the surface of the globe, but a very few are broken up and descend in the form of meteoric stones, or "meteorites," as they are called. If you visit a good museum you may see some of these meteorites. They look like a bit of rock with a sort of crust over the top. They are usually black in colour and are largely composed of iron. Most of them are covered with little indentations which look rather like thumb-marks. The largest meteorite ever found was discovered in Mexico. It was about thirteen feet long, six feet broad, and five feet thick, and it weighed about fifty tons. Another very large one was brought from Greenland by Peary in 1894. It weighed thirty-six and a half tons, but must have been larger originally, as the Eskimo had chipped away fragments to make weapons. You must not think, however, that meteorites are all large and heavy. The majority are quite tiny; many do not weigh an ounce, and I daresay there are thousands upon thousands so tiny that they have never been found at all.

Now perhaps you will wonder where these meteors come from. How did they happen to get into space and how did they manage to get in our way? Well, you have all heard of comets, and you know that comets are heavenly bodies, very hot and bright, which wander through the heavens. Some of these

comets go round the sun just as we do, others go round it once and then seem to disappear for ever. Now when a comet is near the sun it has a tail which looks very much like fiery hair streaming out from it. This tail is formed by the sun's pushing off from the comet some of the lighter matter of which it is composed. Sometimes the tail breaks off altogether, and the matter of which it is composed cools down and becomes solid. These solid bodies get left behind, but they still follow the path where the comet has been. One day the earth crosses that path and comes in contact with these bodies, and so we have a fall of meteors.

Now, boys and girls, God sent you into this world to shine, but He meant you to be something better than a meteor. Don't be one of the people who are too brilliant to do steady work and whose light is certain to go out. Don't be one of those who are fair and pleasant on the outside, but who can't be relied upon. Do your duty faithfully and thoroughly. Never mind how slow you are, or how humble. Shine with your own little steady light. Be a fixed star, sure and steadfast. Someone will be the brighter for your shining.

THE GREAT KEEPER.

Him that is able to keep you from falling.—Jude 24 (AV).

Our text is at the end of one of the gloomiest books in the Bible. We know little about the writer of it, but he must have been well known among the Christians. His Epistle is written to the whole Christian Church—to men and women of different race and outlook on life, but who in religion are at one, for Jude speaks of a common salvation. He was very much in earnest. He saw that many of those who began well in the Christian life were living in a way that showed God was not in their thoughts; and he said very hard things to them.

The Epistle of Jude is a mysterious little book, but the stern writer of it has a loving heart. You are sometimes afraid of a teacher who appears very stern, and who, if he says an encouraging thing to you, puts in a little word to keep you humble. Yet, after a time you may discover something that makes you respect him. Such men are often very downright and good. After his hard words Jude breaks into a message of hope to the Christians who had been forgetting God. "There is One," he says, "who both *can* keep you and *will*. He will not only keep you from falling but will

do it so that He will, at last, present you without faults, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

Jude wanted to alarm those Christians simply because he saw their danger. It is told of one of the great painters of Italy that, being engaged upon a fresco inside the dome of a lofty cathedral, and standing on a platform hung more than a hundred feet from the floor, he paused to look at the effect of his work, and, absorbed in his art, kept walking backward for a better view, till, forgetful of danger, he had almost reached the platform's edge, unconscious that two more backward steps would hurl him down to death. A brother artist, seeing his danger, but afraid to speak lest a sudden shout should precipitate the fall he was anxious to prevent, seized a brush full of paint and hurled it against the face of the brilliant figure on the dome, completely spoiling the labour of many days. But that saved the painter's life; for, resenting what he thought an insult, and springing forward with a cry, he only then discovered that it was a friendly act to save him from an awful death.

You boys and girls are in danger of falling. You go to school one morning determined to do the right thing. Things seem to go all right at first; you think so at least. But in the playground you come down. You fail to "play the game." You speak behind someone's back; you misrepresent something in telling it; you even tell a lie. Did you ask God before

you left home to help you to do right? He can guard us from stumbling, but we have to keep asking His help day by day. Even if one day we seem to get on well, the very next morning may see us in the mud. God does not give us an unlimited supply of strength, leaving us to spend it as we please. His promises only are unlimited; and He fulfils them as they are presented.

Boys and girls can help each other to keep from stumbling. In climbing steep Alpine tracks no man is independent of his neighbour. Sometimes the members of a climbing expedition are roped together. And it is always the weak one of the party who must be considered. His failure would be the failure of all. The slipping of the feeblest might endanger the lives of all. Remembering the difficulties of life and how easy it is to make false steps, won't you be a helper of those who are weaker and have had fewer advantages than yourselves?

WALKING IN WHITE.

They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.—Rev. iii. 4.

DID you ever notice how often the word "white" is mentioned in the Book of Revelation? If you take the trouble to count you will find it occurs no fewer than nineteen times. We read there of a white horse and white horses, and of a white cloud and a white stone. The head and hair of Christ are said to be white, and so is the great throne of judgment. Then over and over again we are told of white linen, white robes, or white raiment, and our own special text speaks of "walking in white."

I wonder what John was thinking of when he spoke of "walking in white"? Well, perhaps he had a picture in his mind at the time, the picture of a Roman triumph. Some of you know what that was, and you, too, can make a picture of it in your mind. A triumph was the welcome home given to a victorious general by the people of old Rome. On that day the victor, crowned with laurel and seated in a chariot drawn by four horses, went in solemn procession through the city to the capitol. In front of him were the senate, the magistrates, the musicians, the

spoils, and the fettered captives; and behind him followed the victorious army. It was a great day for him and it was a great day for Rome. It was a general holiday, a day of rejoicing; and in honour of the occasion the citizens all wore the white toga, the white robe that was kept for religious ceremonies and special occasions. You see, white was not only, as we count it, the emblem of purity and innocence, it was also the emblem of victory and triumph.

And so John gave the few faithful Christians in the town of Sardis this message from Christ—that because they had been true to Him, because they had remained pure and holy amidst many temptations to sin, they would walk with Him in white. They would share Christ's triumph. They would wear the white robes of heaven.

Now I wonder how we—you and I—may, like the faithful few in Sardis, become worthy to walk with Christ in white. Long ago—yes, and not so very long ago either!—some men imagined that in order to become worthy to walk with Christ in white they must keep themselves apart from the world; they must live a life of penance and prayer to God, shut away from all the world's sins and sorrows. They hoped by so doing to keep themselves pure and holy.

Now, that is one way of trying to become worthy; but it seems to me a very foolish way; and I can tell you a better. How do I know it is better? I know it is better because it was the way of Jesus, and surely He was the purest and holiest that ever walked this

earth. Yet all the years of His busy life He moved as a man among men. He shared men's sorrows and He rejoiced in their joys. He healed their sickness and He helped in their troubles. Where He was most needed there He was found. He was not afraid to mix with those whom the proud Pharisees called "sinners" or "unclean." He was not afraid to dine with the publicans or to touch the lepers. He ever went about doing good. And if we try hard to copy *His* way, then one day He will say of us too, "Ye shall walk with me in white; for ye are worthy."

Shall I tell you a story I heard the other day?

Once upon a time a little pilgrim found herself on the road to heaven. She was given a fine white robe to walk in, and she knew that only if she kept it spotless would the gates of the golden city open to her. Very carefully she picked her steps, for the way was both rough and muddy. But as she went on she was horror-struck to find that not only was it rough and muddy, but it was actually built of pilgrims who had fallen in the march and who lay bleeding and unheeded in the mire. Presently one of these unhappy creatures cried to the little pilgrim, "Help! Help me up for Christ's sake!" The little pilgrim was about to stoop, when suddenly she remembered her white garment. "No, no," she exclaimed, "I daren't. If I touched you I might be defiled." And she passed on. But even as she passed on she was aghast to see that the edge of her white robe was stained with scarlet. At every step she took the stain spread till at last her

whole garment was scarlet. "What have I done?" she cried. But there was no reply save the moans of the fallen pilgrims.

In despair she turned back, "If I cannot keep my robe white," she said, "at least I can help a lost sister." So she knelt down on the dreadful road and put her arms tenderly round the poor pilgrim who had craved her aid. By exerting all her strength she managed to pull the fallen one out of the mire; then hand in hand, with downcast eyes, the two passed on together. At last, sad and ashamed, they reached the golden gates. No hope had they of entering, for the robe of the one was scarlet, and the robe of the other was filthy rags. But, just as they reached the gates, lo, a miracle!—the scarlet robe of the one and the filthy rags of the other turned in a moment to robes of dazzling white—white so dazzling that even the angels could not look. And the gates of heaven fell back.

AN OPEN DOOR.

An open door.—Rev. iii. 8 (AV).

I WONDER how many of you know how the month of January came by its name? All our months received their names from the Romans. Some of them were called after Roman gods or goddesses, others after famous Romans. July bears the name of the Roman Emperor Julius Cæsar and August that of the Emperor Augustus, but who was January called after?

Well, the Romans had a god named Janus. He had two faces, one looking each way, and he was the god of beginnings and endings. He was also supposed to be the doorkeeper of heaven. In the morning he unlocked the doors of heaven and let the sunshine stream out over the world; and in the evening, when the sun went to rest, he locked the doors again. Doors and gates of houses and temples were under his protection, and the beginnings of days and months and years were held sacred to him. So it came about that January, which is the first month of the year, was called after him.

January, then, is the month of beginnings, the month of the open door. The old year is past and gone, and its door is shut for ever. We cannot open

it again however much we try. But God has opened for us the door of a beautiful, fresh, clean New Year, and it remains to be seen what we are going to do with it. Of course we have all made up our minds to be a little braver, and stronger, and wiser, and better than we were last year.

But now I want you to think of our text a little differently. I want you to think of it in this way. You boys and girls are just in the January of your lives. You are in the month of open doors, and I hope you will make the very best use of these doors, so that there may never come a time when you wish them open and find them shut.

I want to speak about three doors which stand open for you.

1. The first is the *door of Knowledge.* This door is never so wide open as it is in youth, and it is never so easy to enter as then. Youth is the time for learning, not only because it is easier to learn then, but also because it is easier to remember afterwards what we learn at that time. So don't forget to go in at the door of Knowledge while it is wide open and easy to enter.

For the queer thing about open doors is that if we enter by them they lead us on to more and more open doors beyond, and each door leads to a better and a more beautiful place than the last; but if we refuse to enter, the doors gradually get closer and closer until at last they may close altogether; and then no power

of ours can open them again. That is true of the door of Knowledge, and it is true also of the other two doors about which we are going to speak.

2. Another door that is open to us in youth is the *door of Opportunity.* All our life lies before us and we may make so much of it—or so little. As yet we have made no big mistakes; we have done nothing to spoil our life. We have youth and health and strength and hopefulness on our side, and all of these are big opportunities.

And as we grow older there are other opportunities which will open to us if we are ready for them Sometimes you hear people saying, "I never had chance." They say that as an excuse when their life has been a failure. Well, occasionally that may be true; but much oftener it is the case that they never *took* their chance, or never *saw* it when it came along, or were not *ready* for it because they had been trifling when they should have been working. So keep on the alert and do your best always, and then you will not miss your opportunities when you meet them.

3. But there is another door we should all go in at —the *door of Salvation.* It is a door that is never so wide open as it is in youth, and it is a door that many foolish people refuse to enter. It leads to freedom, and joy, and love; and it is the best door of all. By our own foolish ways we closed this door, but God sent His Son so that we might be able to find a way

back to Him and His love. Jesus said, "I am the door," and He invites us to enter by Him so that we may find all that we lost by our own foolishness.

But remember that we may shut this door, too, by our wilfulness. Jesus never shuts it; He always holds it open; but we may shut it by refusing to enter; and every time we refuse, we close it a little bit farther so that it gets more and more difficult to enter by it.

GOD'S PILLARS.

He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.—Rev. iii. 12.

A FEW miles out of Edinburgh there is a wonderful old building called Rosslyn Chapel. From far and near people go to see Rosslyn and to admire its fair arches, its stately pillars, and its exquisite carvings. But the most lovely thing in all that beautiful chapel is a pillar called the "'Prentice pillar." Straight and tall it rises from the ground, and round it twine wreaths of flowers marvellously carved.

That pillar has a legend attached to it. It is said that when the chapel was being built the master-builder resolved that he would have one pillar of surpassing beauty. And in order that it might be specially lovely he determined to make a journey to Italy to view the finest pillars in the churches and cathedrals there, and to make drawings of the best of them.

But while the master was away he left an apprentice boy at home, and this boy resolved that he would carve one of the pillars in the chapel. So, day by day, with love and wonderful skill, he hammered and chiselled, until around the pillar there clung fair wreaths of flowers.

And just as he had finished his task the master returned. He went to the chapel to see how the work had progressed in his absence, and there before him stood a pillar more beautiful than any he had seen or copied, far more beautiful than any he could ever hope to carve.

Now God needs pillars in this world. He needs them to make the world strong and beautiful, and God specially wants the boys and girls to be pillars for Him. But God not only needs pillars, He carves them. And when He forms them He chooses—not just marble, or granite, or bronze. God can make His pillars out of the plainest and meanest material. Out of a very ordinary boy or girl He can carve a pillar far finer and nobler than even the pillar of the 'prentice boy of Rosslyn. All that we need to do is just to give the material into His hands.

There are three marks by which we know God's pillars, and if they are true pillars for Him they should bear these marks.

1. They must be *strong*. A weak pillar is of no use to keep up the roof of a building or support a gallery. If it is not strong then the building that is depending on it will tumble down. And so God's pillars must be strong—strong to choose the right, strong to help people weaker than themselves and to bear their burdens.

2. And then God's pillars must be *straight*. A pillar may be ever so strong, but if it is not straight it can't be relied on. And so God's pillars must

be absolutely straight and reliable. They must scorn deceit and untruth. They must be above the things that are mean and spiteful. They must be dependable.

3. Once more, God's pillars must be *beautiful*. There are plenty of people who are strong and straight, but not beautiful. You can lean upon them and you can always depend on them, but they are rough and unsympathetic in their ways; and so a great deal of their usefulness is spoiled. Don't forget that God needs beauty as well as strength and straightness.

There is another church near Edinburgh, a modern church, where there is also some beautiful carved work. It was built a few years ago, and when it was nearly finished the minister took a friend into it to show him the carvings and to explain them. There were a number of fine pillars in the church, and round the top of each pillar there was some very wonderful carved work. And there was one thing the minister pointed out—the farther into the church he and his friend went the more beautiful were the pillars. At the door they were comparatively plain, but they grew more and more lovely until the two nearest to the communion table were reached. These were the most exquisite of all.

Now it is just like that with us, boys and girls. We may start by being very plain pillars indeed, but if we keep near to God He can carve us into something that is very beautiful and noble, and the nearer we keep to Him the finer we shall become.

So don't forget to ask God to make you into pillars for His temple in this world and the next. Don't just lie about as useless blocks of stone that get in other people's way and trip them up. Make up your mind that you will be of use in the world. Ask God to make you into pillars, strong, and straight, and beautiful.

NEITHER COUNTED THEY THEIR LIVES DEAR.

They loved not their life even unto death.—Rev. xii. 11.

To-day I am going to give you a text and tell you three stories, and then I shall leave you to make the rest of the sermon yourselves.

Here is the text. You will find it in the eleventh verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelation. "They loved not their life even unto death." That is just another way of saying they loved something better than life, they carried their not-love of self so far that they died.

And here are the stories:

1. The first is about a young artist who went to Paris to study. He was very clever, but, alas! he was as poor as he was clever. He was so poor that he had scarcely enough money to feed or clothe himself, and he had to live in a bare little attic six storeys up. But he didn't mind these discomforts a bit. He forgot everything but his art. He was a sculptor; and day after day he worked at his clay models trying to make real the pictures he saw in his brain.

One day a beautiful idea came to him, and he

resolved that, cost what it might, he would model it in clay. So he worked harder than ever, and he ate even less than before, and he slept scarcely at all; and though it was the dead of winter, and bitterly cold up under the roofs, he denied himself even a fire that he might buy the materials for his work. And the statue grew and grew beneath his fingers till at last, one freezing night, it stood complete—a miracle of grace and beauty.

For a long time the artist gazed on it in rapture; then, hungry and starving, he crept into bed. But as he drew the bedclothes up to his chin the thought stabbed through him like a knife. What if the frost should touch the still moist clay and ruin his beloved statue? In an agony of anxiety he rose from his bed, and one by one he took off the blankets and wrapped them gently round his cherished work. Then colder than ever, but glad at heart, he lay down on the bare mattress.

There one of his fellow-students found him in the morning, stiff and cold, but with a smile on his face. And the statue? It was safe. And the wrappings told the story. And his friends and fellow-students had the artist's dream cast in bronze, and you may see it to this day—a memorial of a man who counted not his life dear that his work might live.

2. The second story is a story of the Great War. In one of the battalions training in England there was a certain little man who looked so much the part that really you couldn't blame his comrades for labelling

him "Softy." He wasn't much good at drill, and still less at route marching, and he was no use at all at football, and a rifle scared him to death. So his comrades laughed and said, "You'll never make a man of 'Softy'!"

By and by the battalion went to France; and one day it was sent up to the front line to hold a trench. Now, about this time, the enemy was getting rather sick of fighting, and every day some Germans crept over "no man's land" to our lines and surrendered. On the day that "Softy's" company was holding the trench a great burly German crept up and was hauled in over the parapet. He was taken before an officer—"Softy's" Captain—and "Softy" himself was standing near. Leaning up against some sand-bags was a rifle, and suddenly the German shot out his long arm, grabbed the rifle, and before anyone could stop him, levelled it at the officer. But just as he fired, something happened. Somebody leapt up between and received in his own brain the bullet meant for the Captain. It was "Softy."

They buried him with soldiers' honours, and they put a stone over his grave. And on it they carved these words—"'Softy.' He gave his life for his Captain. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.'"

"Softy" counted not his life dear that his Captain might live.

3. The third story you have all heard; but it can never be told too often. It is the story of One who

could not be happy in Heaven because there was so much unhappiness on earth. He saw that men and women did not understand God's love, and that they were struggling with sin, and fearing death, and finding life a sad and hopeless thing. So He came to earth, and He lived there three-and-thirty years. And He showed men, just by His living day by day, what God was like and what God's love meant. He made it easy for them to know and trust in the Great Father.

But to live was not enough. He had to conquer sin and crush the power of death, and to do that He must die. So, of His own free will, He went to a shameful death. He allowed Himself to be nailed to a cruel cross. And He died there. He counted not His life dear that we, plain *you* and *I*, might live for ever.

NO MORE SEA.

And there was no more sea.—Rev. xxi. 1 (AV).

EVERY healthy boy and girl in this country loves the sea. No wonder! seeing we live on an island. You remember when you first saw it. You kept thinking about it, and wanting to go back to look again, there were so many things that seemed hard to explain. The sea is indeed wonderful. I know a boy who thought that if his father would only allow him to become a sailor his life would be an endless round of pleasure.

We all love the sea. It has been a very good friend and defender of Great Britain. Had it not been for the sea, she might have been a conquered nation to-day. Most of your mothers count the sea a friend. At the seaside near a big city which I know very well, it is a delightful sight on Saturday afternoons to see little family parties squatted here and there on the sands. Both fathers and mothers are to be seen; they kindle a fire of sticks, boil a kettle, and make tea, while the children paddle or build little houses with the sand. Then doesn't the tea taste good! The sea is a family friend indeed.

I wonder if anything ever happened to make you

take a dislike to something you loved very much. You delight in the snow when it comes. Well, I heard of a young country postman—he was little more than a boy—being caught in a terrible snowstorm. His "round" was a lonely one among hills, and there were very few houses. When the drifting snow became so trying that he could scarcely set his face to it, he did not at first mind it much; after a bit, however, he lost the road and then, big boy though he was, he cried like a child and said, "Oh, I wish this awful snow would stop; I wonder if I'll ever see my mother again." It did stop, and he could distinguish fences which guided him back to the road he had lost. At the end of the day he said to his mother, "Mother, I never want to see snow again."

It is a long way from postmen to the Emperor Napoleon, but I believe no man was ever more tired of the sound of the sea than he was. When young and in the glory of his strength I believe he loved gazing on the sea. It fed his ambition, for as he gazed it reminded him of the strength and glory of a conqueror. But the day came when Napoleon was a prisoner on a little island. There he never got away from the sound of the pitiless waves as they dashed upon the seacoast. Don't you think he would hate the sea? It separated him for ever from the attainment of his ambitious plans.

It was the apostle John who wrote the text. When he was a boy no one loved the sea better than he did.

He grew up to be a fisherman, and because of Jesus Christ the Sea of Galilee had many associations for him. He loved it to his old age. And when the great ocean was pointed out to him from the hills of Judæa, the sight of it would make him wonder what lay beyond. "God," he would say, "all things were made by him. . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men." John had a wonderful mind. But his life ended very differently from what he himself ever dreamed it would. Like Napoleon, he was banished for a time to a little island. But, unlike the Emperor, John was sent to Patmos because of his loyalty to his great Master Jesus Christ. In his island prison John was never out of sound of the waves. In this book they can be heard from beginning to end. The voice of the "Son of man" was, in John's ears, "as the sound of many waters." When the sea was calm and the sunset very beautiful he thought of the glory of the new Jerusalem. "And I saw . . . a sea of glass mingled with fire." Don't you think you see him dreaming and praying on lonely Patmos? But sometimes John became possessed with the idea that the sea was separating him from many who were near and dear to him. Then when he pictured the New Jerusalem, it was as a place where there were no separations: "There was no more sea."

Had it not been for John's banishment to Patmos, and for his feeling of being parted from all his friends, we should not have had this wonderful book of Revelation. The last chapters are like music, and you know

that some birds sing best when they are in a darkened cage. John's music was the music of banishment. "I was in the Spirit," he says at the beginning of the book. That means that God was beside him and was speaking to him.

You boys and girls can read a lesson from John's words. Have you any sick schoolfellows? You may know of one who has to be in bed all day. He is not lying there without thinking. He may be feeling very lonely indeed; and through his loneliness he may be learning a lesson. God often comes near to lonely people.

Some of you may have to go away from home soon, it may be to school, it may be to a situation. You will feel lonely at first; home was very different. But God will speak to you. He will tell you secrets, as He told them to John. But to hear Him you must pray. I have known lonely people who felt that the Heavenly Jerusalem was on this earth, and that even here their absent friends were round about them. That is a beautiful idea. Certainly I know that you need never be separated from Jesus Christ.

THE JASPER.

The first foundation was jasper.—Rev. xxi. 19.

Our stone for March is the jasper. I have chosen it because the blood-stone, which is one variety of jasper, is the birth-stone for the month.

There was more of the jasper than of any other stone in the New Jerusalem, for not only was the first foundation of the city jasper, but its walls were jasper as well. Then He who sat upon the throne was compared to a jasper; and the light of the city was said to be as the light of a jasper.

The stone which the Ancients called jasper may have been a translucent stone—that is to say, one that you can see light through; but the stone that we know as jasper is an opaque stone—one that you cannot see light through. It is a stone of many colours. The commonest jasper is yellow, but there is a scarlet jasper, and a red jasper, and a crimson jasper, and a green jasper. There is a jasper in different shades of brown which comes from Egypt, and Siberia gives us what is called ribbon jasper because it is striped like a coloured ribbon. India, too, has a rare green jasper, with little red spots in it. This is known as the blood-stone, and it has sometimes been chosen as the special

stone for Easter, because the head of Christ crowned with the crown of thorns has been cut out of it, and the red drops have been used to represent drops of blood.

The jasper has been, from earliest times, a favourite, both as a gem and as an ornamental stone in building. The portraits of the Roman Emperors were carved on it, and the finest intaglio (an intaglio is the opposite of a cameo; it is cut in whilst a cameo stands out) in the British Museum, the head of the Roman goddess of wisdom, Minerva, is cut out of a jasper. To this day it is a favourite stone for signet rings. If father has a signet ring with a red or green stone in it—a stone you can't see through—ten chances to one it is a jasper.

Large pieces of jasper are used in buildings. The altar in Canterbury Cathedral stands on a platform of yellow jasper, thirty feet long and fourteen wide. Anyone who has been to Italy and has visited her wonderful churches will tell you that they owe much of their beauty to the use of the jasper stone.

Jasper is very hard. It is so hard that it cannot be removed from the bed-rock in the ordinary way. Instead, the workmen bore holes in the rock, and into these they drive wedges of wood which they soak in water. The water makes the wood swell till it bursts the rock. Then the fragments are carefully collected and sent to be cut and polished.

Because jasper is hard and strong it made a splendid first foundation-stone of the Holy City. The other eleven foundations could safely rest on it. Because it is

so hard and suitable for foundations it has been called St. Peter's stone. You remember Christ called Peter a foundation-stone when He said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Now, what is the jasper's message to us? Is it not this—"Be strong"?

1. *Be strong in body.*—Do you know what makes the red spots in the beautiful blood-stone? It is a stuff called oxide of iron. Do you know what makes the red in your cheeks? The very same iron. You have heard people speak of having iron in the blood. You must have plenty of iron in your blood if you want to be healthy boys and girls.

What gives us that iron? Why, good plain food, and plenty of sleep, and lots of fresh air. Don't turn up your nose at milk puddings or an honest plate of porridge, and sigh for pies and paste. Stick to the plain fare and you will grow both tall and strong. Don't want to sit up late at night. Remember one hour's sleep before midnight is equal to two after it, and the person who burns the candle late at night will soon have cheeks to match the candle wax. Don't be afraid of fresh air, or an open window, or a shower of rain. Change your shoes and stockings when they get wet, but be out as much as possible in the open. That will bring to your cheeks roses as red as any in the garden.

2. *Be strong in your character.*—Have good principles and stick to them. Know the right and do it. Don't

be either coaxed or driven into doing the wrong. Be firm and immovable as the jasper rock. After all, what is the use of knowing the right if you don't do it?

A bright little chap was sent home from school for bad behaviour. "Why, Willie," said a friend, "how did this happen? I thought you had better principles." "Oh," said Willie, "it wasn't my principles; my principles were all right. It was my conduct they sent me home for." It's no use merely knowing what's right. The thing is to do it. And that is what takes real strength of character.

3. *Be strong for others.*—The jasper foundation had to bear the weight of the other eleven foundations, but it was equal to its task. We have often to be foundation-stones. We have to be strong for others. We have to act as a support to those weaker than ourselves. We have to infuse a little of our own strength into them.

A man in the north of Scotland once got the present of an eagle. He was very proud of it, and kept it chained in the courtyard of his house. He fed it and petted it, but the poor bird pined and grew sicker day by day. It looked so heart-broken, with its drooping wings and its film-covered eyes, that at last the owner feared it might die, and he determined to give it its freedom. He took it out to the hillside, and he set it on a rock, and then he lay down in the heather to watch what would happen.

Presently he saw it raise its head, open its eyes, and look upwards. The man himself saw nothing, but the eagle saw something that he could not see, and heard a sound that he could not hear. By and by a speck appeared in the sky. It grew larger and larger, and as it drew near the man saw that it was another eagle coming to the rescue of the sick bird. At last, with a cry of joy, it swooped down beside the invalid. It fanned the poor creature with its mighty wings and lifted it on its broad pinions, till the sick bird gathered strength and courage from its strong friend, and, spreading its wings, soared aloft beside it into the blue sky.

Boys and girls, we should be like that eagle. We should be strength to the weak. We can help those who have little strength in a thousand small ways. We needn't make a parade of it, but when we see an opportunity of backing someone up, or of lending a helping hand, or of giving a good lead, we should slip in quietly and use the strength God has given us.

Do you know that about eleven-twelfths of the people in the world are weak people—not bad people? They are people who need a strong leader. They are excellent followers if someone shows them the way. The other twelfth are the leaders, the strong men, those who bear the burdens, those who are the foundation-stones on which others build.

If God has made you one of the rare twelfth use the strength he has given you to serve your fellow-men.

So doing you will serve Him, and make yourself one with Him. For He came to earth two thousand years ago just that He might help the fallen and be strength to the weak.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE CHRYSOPRASE.

The tenth, chrysoprase.—Rev. xxi. 20.

In most lists of gems for the month the sardonyx is the stone for August. You remember we spoke of it away back in January when we were talking of the onyx. I told you then that the sardonyx was the red and white onyx, and as we said nearly all there is to say about the onyx in January, I think we had better choose a stone of our own for August. What do you say to one of those with a queer name — the chrysoprase?

That is a stone we rarely hear of, but it is a very pretty stone all the same. It is what is known as semi-precious, that is to say, it is not found in the first list of precious stones. That list, by the way, is a very small one. It includes only five gems—the diamond, the emerald, the ruby, the sapphire, and the pearl. And some people want to keep out the pearl!

Chrysoprase sounds strange to our ears, but those of you who are learning Greek will know that it is a word made out of two Greek words *chryso* and *prasos*, the first of which means "golden" and the second "leek." Golden leek! — that describes the chrysoprase to perfection—for it is a leek-green stone, one variety of

which is golden-green and the other pale apple-green. It is rather a brittle stone and apt to splinter, so the lapidaries or gem cutters have to be specially careful in cutting it; but it has one advantage over some other stones, it does not lose or change its colour in artificial light.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the chrysoprase became very fashionable. The reason for this was that Frederick the Great of Prussia, who conquered Silesia in 1745, took a fancy to the stone, which was found in quantities in Silesia. He had two famous tables made of it, and used it largely for mosaic work. And, of course, because it was the favourite of a king it became a favourite of many people.

There is one story about the chrysoprase which I particularly want to tell you to-day. It is this. Many, many years ago, so the legend runs, there was a certain good and beautiful Princess of Roumania called the Princess Trina. She was greatly beloved by her subjects, for she loved them and cared for them in endless ways. But, alas! one year a famine arose in the land. The people had to buy bread from other countries, and the prices rose higher and higher, till their money was gone, and they were like to starve. All this time the Princess Trina had been selling her jewels and giving the money to the famishing people, but she too had come to the end of her possessions, or almost the end. She had only one jewel left—a little golden lizard with chrysoprase eyes which her mother

had given to her on her wedding-day. A wizard, or wise man, had once told the Princess that on no account must she part with it, because it would one day bring her help and untold wealth, and also because whoever wore a chrysoprase would be able in time of great distress to understand the language of animals.

Now the Princess Trina was very unwilling to part with this jewel, but she was still more unwilling to see her people suffer and hear their children crying for food; so she was kneeling one evening by her window weeping and praying and making up her mind to sell her golden lizard with the chrysoprase eyes, when in popped a real live little lizard at the window. It looked up at the Princess, and then it spoke in lizard language, and, to her astonishment, the Princess understood. This is what it said, "Do not despair, O Princess! Help shall arise for thee out of a river. Only seek."

The Princess felt tremendously cheered, so she dried her eyes, and put on her cloak, and went out to look for the river. She searched one after another of the rivers of Roumania till her feet were weary and her eyes were aching and her heart was nearly in despair —nearly but not quite, for whenever she felt specially discouraged she repeated to herself the lizard's message and began to search again. At last she came to the rocky bed of a beautiful stream, the Riul Doamnei, and there she discovered the promised help, for she found in the river-bed a vast treasure of chrysoprase the same as her golden lizard's eyes. She had it mined

and sold it, and the money bought bread for her hungry people, and they were fed till the days of famine were ended. And in proof of this story they say that the waters of the Riul Doamnei are leek-green to this day.

Well, that may be only a legend, but there is a great deal of truth in it too. And I want you to remember the story when you think of the chrysoprase, for the message of the chrysoprase seems to me to be the message of the little lizard, "Never despair! Hope, and go on bravely!"

Boys and girls, there is not much need for me to preach to you and tell you to hope. When you are young, to hope is the easiest thing in the world. No! what I ask you to do is to preach hope to me and to every other grown-up person you meet, especially when we look sad or weary or discouraged. There are heaps of despairing persons in the world. They are finding life very dark and dreary because for them there is no hope, and hope is one of the foundation-stones of life, as the chrysoprase was one of the foundation-stones of the New Jerusalem. Now, you young people have so much hope in your hearts that you are simply bubbling over with it; you have enough for your own use and plenty to spare. I want you to give of your plenty to others who need it badly. Just keep looking around, and if you see anybody in want of a little hope give them some of yours on the spot.

I need not tell you exactly how you are to do it. First, because there are about a thousand ways you can

do it; second, because I want you to find out these ways yourself; third, because the ways you find out will be better than any way of which I could tell you. Just say to yourself in the morning, "I'm going to be a chrysoprase. Before night I'm going, if I can, to bring a little cheer and hope to somebody." Say that to yourselves, boys and girls, say it and *truly mean* it, and I've not the slightest doubt but you'll *do* it.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE AMETHYST.

The twelfth, amethyst.—Rev. xxi. 20.

Our precious stone for February is the last in the third great list mentioned in the Bible; it is the twelfth foundation-stone of the New Jerusalem—the amethyst. It is also the ninth stone of the High Priest's breastplate. It is the birth-stone for February, so the boys and girls whose birthday is in February can listen hard.

There is one remarkable thing about the amethyst. All the other stones mentioned in the Bible have been argued about by scholars, and articles have been written saying that the word used for the stone did not mean that stone but another. But nobody has ever had any doubt about the amethyst. All are agreed that the amethyst is just the amethyst—true to its name from the very beginning.

I need not describe an amethyst to you. You know it just as well as I do. Indeed, very possibly some of the girls present have an amethyst brooch or an amethyst pendant, for an amethyst is a stone often worn by young people. There are a great many amethysts in the world, and they are not so costly as some of the other precious stones. That is why we

often see them. But, though the amethyst may be inexpensive, it is none the less lovely, and it has always been prized for its exquisite colour. It was used as a gem by the ancient Egyptians, and our own forefathers knew it also, for amethyst beads have been found in old Anglo-Saxon graves in England.

The stone is a form of crystal, and it is found in Russia, India, Ceylon, and South America. It is also found in this country; but the home specimens are not so valuable as those from abroad.

The Hebrew word for amethyst meant "dreams," for it was supposed that the amethyst brought to its owner sleep. The Greek word is the word we use. It means "not intoxicated," because the Greeks believed that the amethyst prevented drunkenness. They even thought that if wine were drunk out of an amethyst cup it could not harm the drinker. The amethyst, you see, was the symbol for sobriety. To the Eastern it was also the symbol for firm friendship.

Now what has the amethyst to say to us? The onyx said, "Choose the best Engraver." I think the amethyst says, "Be loyal."

1. It is the symbol of sobriety, and as such it says, *Be loyal to yourself*. What does being loyal to ourselves mean? It just means doing nothing unworthy of the self that God gave us. It means not hurting our body with over-eating, or over-drinking, or overworking, or over-amusing. It means not abusing God's gift in any way. It means not condescending to soil

our soul with low ideas, or unclean words, or mean actions. In a word, it means being true to the best that is in us.

2. The amethyst is the symbol of friendship. As such it says, *Be loyal to others.* The first necessity of friendship is loyalty. If you are not loyal you are no friend. You are an enemy. Those who run down their friends behind their back are beneath contempt. Nobody wants their society—we can't call it their *friendship.* A friend is one who is loyal through thick and thin, who sticks to you and believes in you whatever others may say.

A little boy was once asked to describe a friend, and he gave the best description I know. He said, "A friend is a chap what sticks to you even after he has found you out." That is the kind of friend to have, and the kind of friend to be.

3. The amethyst is purple—the royal colour—and it is known as the "soldiers' stone." As such it says, *Be loyal to your king.* If we wear the king's colours we must be his man, his at all costs. We must be loyal not only in name. We must be ready to prove our loyalty.

When the French were invading Russia at the beginning of last century they arrived at a small village. All the inhabitants had fled save one peasant —a woodman, judging from the axe in his belt. The officer in command of the French troops ordered the man to be shot. The soldiers raised their muskets and

prepared to fire, but the peasant coolly looked down the barrels of the guns and never flinched. The officer was so struck with the man's courage that he commanded the firing-party to lower their muskets, and spare the prisoner's life. "But," said he, "we shall put a mark upon him." They made a branding iron red-hot and placed it on the peasant's hand. When they removed it something was left there. "What is that?" asked the woodman. "That," said the officer, "is an N. for Napoleon. You belong to him now." The man turned, placed the branded hand on a solid place, took his axe from his belt, and with one stroke severed the hand from his arm. "There now!" cried he, "there is not one bit of me that does not belong to the Czar." That man was truly loyal. He preferred to lose his hand rather than be branded a traitor to his country. He was willing to give his hand for his king.

How much are we willing to give for our country? And how deep does our loyalty go? We are ready to climb the lamp-post or scale the wall to see the procession, and we shout ourselves hoarser than most, and sing "God save the King" till we feel thrills like little trickles of cold water running down our back. But that kind of loyalty is only skin-deep. The loyalty that is ready to sacrifice everything, if need be, is the true loyalty.

4. But the amethyst has one more message for us. It says, *Be loyal to your Heavenly King.* Boys and

girls, that kind of loyalty sometimes costs more than loyalty to your earthly king. You will find when you grow up and go out into the world that it will often be very, very difficult not to be disloyal. When your companions taunt you about your religion, when they laugh you to scorn and call you coward because you will not join them in some scheme which you know to be wrong, then is the time to set your teeth and say to yourself, "No matter what happens I will be loyal, I will, I will, I will." And *you will.* There's no doubt about it.

There is a beautiful fancy which I came across the other day. It tells what becomes of the gold of the corn and the purple of the heather when the summer is over, and the grain is garnered and the bloom of the heather faded. The gold and the purple are not lost although we see them no more. The angels have taken them to build the golden streets and the amethyst walls of the City of God. And one day, if we are loyal to the King of Heaven, we shall find again in His heavenly city the gold and the purple which we loved and lost on earth.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

A MAY-DAY SERMON.

His name shall be on their foreheads.—Rev. xxii. 4.

THE first of May—May-day! I wonder if you boys and girls like the sound of that word "May-day" as well as some of us older people do.

We like it because the May-days of long ago seem very beautiful to us now. I remember one specially, as it was spent by a quaint little girl of seven years old. She had rather a dull home. Her father was a very strict man, and her mother never thought of playing with her little boy and girl. But Louie woke very, very happy on May-day morning. "Louie, Lou—ie!" she heard her mother calling, "it is six o'clock; rise and wash your face with the May dew." Louie jumped out of bed very willingly indeed, for she remembered—how could she forget it?—that she had been chosen to be the May Queen. Her crown of sweet spring flowers was ready. It lay covered up on the top of a chest of drawers in her room. She was a clever little girl, and had learnt quite a number of pieces of poetry. You will scarcely believe it, but as she dressed herself she kept reciting in a childish voice:

You have waked and called me early, called me early, mother dear;
This is *the* most lovely day of all the glad New-year;
Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest, merriest day;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

As soon as she was dressed she trotted out to the garden, and, gathering the dew from the grass, wiped her face all over with it. "Heckie!" she asked softly, for her wee brother had followed her, "is my face beautiful?" "Yes, Louie; yes, it's like—it's like one of the little angels in father's big Bible."

Later, dressed in a simple white frock, and wearing a crown of spring flowers, Louie walked in front of a long procession of school children. Her king was a little fellow whose first name was "Phelim," and her maids were girls very much bigger than herself. They kept saying, "Walk faster, walk faster"; but Louie was too happy to mind; for although "Phelim" did not speak to her, he wore a crown like a real king's crown, and it was made of golden lilies. The walk ended in marching round part of a fine old garden, curtseying as they passed an old lady—the gentle duchess who owned the place—and then viewing a collection of work that was ready to be sent to a missionary somewhere.

"Mother, I was very, very happy," Louie said afterwards (little girls did not use the word "*awfully*" then); "I won't dirty my dresses any more."

The few of those children who are alive now are

elderly men and women. Just about a year ago I had a letter from the little May Queen. "I can almost smell the flowers," she wrote—"the flowers that formed my crown on that May morning, long ago."

Boys and girls, the May dew and the spring flowers are still here. In Edinburgh, as early as six o'clock on the first of May, one can see numbers of young people toiling up "Arthur's Seat" to wash their faces with dew from its grassy slopes or its summit.

The idea that the fresh dew of a May morning can make our faces beautiful is an old-fashioned one. But some of us like it. It makes us think backward. Better still, our thoughts go forward too—away to the beauty that is spoken of in the Bible, the beauty that comes from being in God's presence. The Bible is full of stories about beautiful people. They had the beauty that comes from doing kind actions, from being true, from having noble thoughts.

A little girl was one day reading the Bible, and she came upon some verses that spoke of Heaven. "Grandpa," she said, "my Bible says that those who are in heaven shall never hunger or thirst. I understand that; but it says that '*His name shall be on their foreheads.*' What does that mean, grandpa? Who will write the name of Jesus on their foreheads?"

"Why, they will write it themselves, of course, girlie."

"Write it *themselves*, grandpa! But how?"

"Why, Margery, we are every day writing the

names of our masters on our foreheads. Some people make a sad mistake and serve sin, and sin stamps its seal upon their faces. Some serve care, and care brands their foreheads with deep wrinkles. But those who love the Lord Jesus, Margery, and walk with Him, and do His will, write the name of their dear Master on their forehead. They cannot help it."

Margery looked up wonderingly into her grandfather's face. She glanced at the grey hair that, like a crown of glory, circled the old man's brow. She noticed more than that; she looked into his kind eyes. She flung her arms round the old man's neck, and cried, "I think I understand now, grandpa."

That is a little American story I read the other day.

And let me tell you something else that is very interesting. An eminent London photographer wrote an article for a learned paper. In the course of it he said that "one of the best evidences for religion is the type of face that the religious life produces." "*His name shall be on their foreheads.*"

Getting into God's presence is like bathing your face with dew. It will give you such a feeling of happiness that you will never want to do a mean action. You will always want to be true, and you will be constantly trying to make everybody round you as happy as you are yourself.

AMEN.

Amen.—Rev. xxii. 21.

THIS is one of the words you hear most frequently in church. It comes at the end of the hymns and prayers and sometimes the minister says it at the end of his sermon. Did you ever stop to think what the word means? It is not just a sign that we may open our eyes and raise our heads if we have been praying, or sit down if we have been singing. The word has been put there for a purpose. It means that you really mean and believe all that you have been praying or singing, that you are in earnest.

"Amen" is a very old word. Originally it was an adjective and meant firm, true, steadfast. It was in use in very early times among the Hebrews. When they wished to give their assent to any very solemn statement or command they answered "Amen." You remember when King David was dying he sent for Zadok the high priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah captain of his bodyguard, and told them that he wished Solomon to be made king in his stead. Then he gave orders that these three men were to bring Solomon down to Gihon and there crown him king. And Benaiah answered, "Amen: the Lord God

of my lord the king say so too." That just meant "Yea, verily, may the God of David grant that this may be so." But Benaiah didn't stop at saying "Amen." That "Amen" meant that he had pledged his word to carry out the king's commands. And not only did he carry them out to the letter, but afterwards he stood by Solomon to defend and deliver him from his enemies.

In later times the word "Amen" was taken into the worship of the Jewish synagogues. It was used by the congregation as a solemn response to the prayers or hymns of praise of the minister. By answering "Amen," they made, as it were, all that the minister had said their own, just as if they had prayed the prayers or sung the hymns themselves. Then from the synagogue it was taken into the worship of the Early Christian Church, and so we have it in our church worship to-day.

Do you know that this word "Amen" was a very frequent word on the lips of Jesus? Unfortunately the men who translated our Bible have tried to turn it into English. When Jesus was about to say something very solemn or very, very important, something that He wanted to assure His hearers was very true, He began by saying, "Verily I say unto you." If you had a Greek New Testament, you would see that the word translated "verily" is just "Amen." And when Jesus said, "Amen, *I* say unto you," He meant that because He said it they could count on its being true.

There was once a small boy who was trying to describe his baby sister to a lady. He wanted to say something specially nice about her and so he ended, "She is just an 'Amen' baby!" "And what kind of baby may that be?" asked the lady. "Well, you see, she holds up her hands so: like the minister does at the blessing."

Now we want all the boys and girls to be "Amen" boys and girls. We want them all to be blessings to the world and to God. How can they be that?

1. *By being steadfast and faithful and true* as Jesus was.

There is a fine story told of William, Prince of Orange, who became William III. of England. When he was invited to come to England he gave written pledges to some of his friends that he would appoint them to office. When he was handing out these pledges, one man who was to hold a very high position refused the paper. "Your Majesty's word is sufficient," he said, "I would not serve a king whose word I could not trust!"

That was fine, wasn't it? And we want people to be able to say the same of you. We want them to be able to say, "John's word is sufficient. If he has promised to do anything you may count on its being done," or "It must be true, because Mary said so, and you can always trust her word."

David Livingstone used to say, "Jesus is a gentleman, and He keeps His word as a gentleman should." There

is nothing grander than to be a follower of Jesus and to be absolutely true and straight in word and deed.

2. And, second, we want you to be "Amen" boys and girls by *making your lives a response to God's will.*

Away on the shores of the Adriatic there is a beautiful custom practised among the fisher folk.

When the boats have put out to sea in the evening and are lying far out beside the nets, the wives and friends of the fishermen steal down to the seashore and sing the first verse of one of their favourite hymns. The music of their voices is carried far across the still waters till it reaches the fishermen at their work. Then the men take up the words of the second verse and back across the water steals the sound of the melody. And the women, hearing the echo of their own song, go home satisfied that their friends are safe.

Boys and girls, are you responding to the music of God's voice? Are your lives in tune with His? They will never produce the true melody until they are. He is calling you now. Will you answer with a glad "Amen"?

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TO

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

VOLS. I. TO VI.

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